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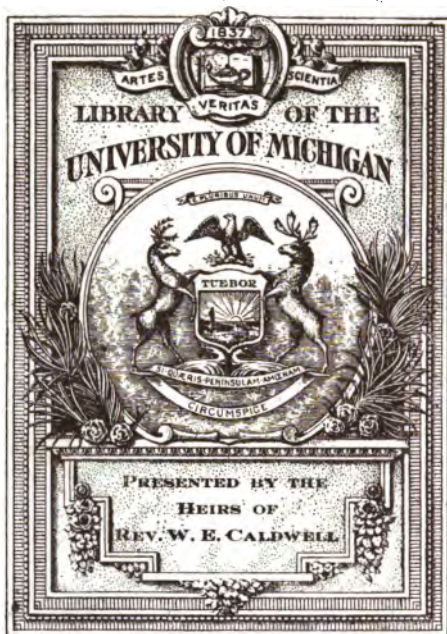
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R. 2734

Minnie B. Caldwell,
from Mrs. Goodrich.
August, 1891.
Ann Arbor
Michigan

THEN AND NOW;

—OR—

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:

HOPE'S FIRST SCHOOL.

By ZILLAH RAYMOND.

WILMINGTON, N. C.:

JACKSON & BELL, WATER-POWER PRESSES.

1883.

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TO MY
BELOVED FATHER, WHO WITH MY PRECIOUS MOTHER,
NOW RESTING FROM HER LABORS,
LAID THE FOUNDATION OF ALL THE EDUCATION WHICH I POSSESS,
AND OF ALL THE USEFULNESS WHICH I CAN EVER LAY CLAIM TO,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

In writing a book like this, which we now propose to place before the public, the author labors under peculiar disadvantages. The time and place both being present, the story lacks the illusory charm of distance; yet, we trust that this lack may be more than compensated by the reflection that the scenes and characters are natural and home-like. In the comic, as well as in the bad character of the book, we have however, strictly avoided *personality*. They may all be considered as representatives of certain classes of persons rather than descriptions of real individuals. Possibly, many teachers can recall to memory a Mrs. Simmons, in the person of some hard working, illiterate, yet ambitious woman; or a Miss Rachel Tyler—the true and tried friend of the orphan, the useful “old maid aunt;” or a Mr. Fogyman, the stickler for past customs; or a Mr. Liggins, the coarse, common raised drunkard; or a Mr. Leonard, the representative of a large class of persons who contrive to worse than *bury* splendid talents, and shine only to mislead; we say that many teachers can recall just such people to mind. That *all* do not come under their observation during *one* short session of school, or in *one* neighborhood, is of course conceded. We have merely brought them all together in this manner, as being both more convenient and more effective. In these days of Normal Schools and Teacher's Institutes, and other facilities, to aid teachers in their vocation, it would be a work of supererogation, not to say presumption, in us to offer any suggestion in regard to teaching. We have in our story merely described a youthful, inexperienced country teacher, who nevertheless, from natural talent for, and great perseverance in, her calling, might have been considered a little above the average country teacher *eight years* ago, but who would possibly be viewed in a very different light *now*. In this manner we wish to show the improvement that has been made in the Old North State during the last eight years—the difference between her *Then* and her *Now*. With this explanation, we leave our little volume in the hands of our readers, trusting that it will receive a fair and impartial perusal.

ZILLAH RAYMOND.



THEN AND NOW;

OR HOPE'S FIRST SCHOOL.

CHAPTER I.

It was toward the close of a sultry day in August. The sun fell with a fierce glare, but little tempered by the approach of evening upon the tall pines, the dusty streets and wooden houses of the little village, which we shall call Tradeville. We choose that name because it is peculiarly appropriate, there being no busier place of *its size* in any locality. Tradeville is in the southeastern part of North Carolina, and is situated on a branch of the Cape Fear, near the head of navigation. Its sight is neither a beautiful nor commanding one, being no more than a sandy reach, somewhat elevated above the level of the river. Two parallel roads divide the village. Its dwelling-houses are principally ranged along these roads, some quite near and others at a little distance from them. Besides these, Tradeville contains a turpentine distillery, some two or three workshops, a restaurant, a boarding-house, a steam saw-mill, some half dozen stores, including a bar-room, and at no great distance from it is a saw and grist mill, moved by water-power. The site of a church is still visible on the outskirts of the little village; its fiery fate wrapped in mystery, though circumstantial evidence was so strong as to induce many to believe that they *almost knew* who were the authors of the crime. Be that as it may, no one was ever brought to punishment for it, nor was the church ever

rebuilt in the same place. Tradeville is, therefore, destitute of a house of worship, one a mile distant answering the purpose. Near the site of the old one is the cemetery, its white tomb-stones gleaming through the forest, marking the spot where lie "the loved and lost." The reader can judge from this description that this village does not abound in *natural* beauty, yet we would not leave them to infer that it is an unattractive place. There is such an air of thrift about it; the houses, the majority of which are comparatively new, look so home-like and cheerful, with their spacious yards, blooming flowers and evergreen hedges, and there is such a constant tide of people coming and going, as to give the stranger quite a favorable opinion of the place. Its roads, or streets, whichever one prefers to call them, are in dry weather extremely dusty, and carts and wagons, bearing the inevitable loads of tar or turpentine, may be daily seen wending their slow way to the stores near the river, their contents to be shipped thence on flats or on the little steamer to the nearest port, some forty miles away. The river near the landing is spanned by a bridge, the centre of it forming a draw-bridge, for the convenience of flats coming from the upper part of the river. This bridge is to *us* the sweetest spot in Tradeville. It is very pleasant on the afternoon of a sultry day to stand there and gaze on the dark, cool waters, skimmed by birds and insects, and reflecting in their depths the azure sky, the rosy clouds and moss-draped trees. One can see the little boats, lying idle in sheltered coves, or gliding over the water as they are rowed by skilled hands, and on the shore, at a little distance off, people pursuing their various avocations, some weighing turpentine, others coming in or going out of town, in vehicles of various descriptions, and not a few loafing around, talking politics and imbibing freely of the nectar sold at the bar-room—nectar, though, scarcely "fit for the gods." On the air falls the hum of machinery, and at stated times the shrill whistle of the steam mill, or the blow of the steamer as it nears its landing. There is a

subtle charm about running water, whether it be the dashing mountain stream, or the more sluggish one of the lowlands, and possibly Hope Caldwell felt the truth of this, for she loved to stand upon this bridge and gaze dreamily down on the dark river beneath, as though fascinated by its eternal flow. There it was that we first saw her eight years ago, and at first sight we took so deep an interest in her as to inquire into her past history; and *since* then we have followed up her subsequent career, and we intend to give *both* to our readers. But first we will attempt to describe her personal appearance, though any description of ours will be utterly inadequate to convey a just impression of the singular and indefinable charm which *at times* was here. Picture to yourself a slight, elegant figure, a little *under* the medium height of women, surmounted by a perfectly shaped head, covered with lustrous, silken black hair—the face, so far as features are concerned, beyond criticism—pearly teeth, a lovely mouth, a perfect nose and chin, luminous dark eyes and silken lashes—yet, withal, lacking color and plumpness—those two great additions to the most exquisite face and form. Her complexion was generally destitute of the rosy tint, so beautiful in youth, and she was very thin, though graceful as a fairy. Add to these detractions from her loveliness, viz: thinness and pallor, that her expression betokened *earnest thought* rather than *gayety* or *sweetness*, and the reader need not be surprised that people did not usually consider Hope a beauty, though we were captivated by her *looks*, even before we formed her acquaintance. On the August evening when we first met her, she left the bridge immediately after the arrival of the weekly mail, which was brought to the village from the city, some twenty miles distant overland, by a man who drove a wretched looking horse. The post-office was kept in a store, and thither Hope repaired to inquire for the mail. It took sometime for the postmaster to overlook the budget taken from the leathern mail-bag, but when it was all sorted out, he handed her two letters

and a magazine. With these in hand, she walked rapidly homeward. The house which she called home was a common, unpainted, rather dilapidated-looking one, with nothing to please the eye nor gratify the taste in its exterior appearance. Even the few flowers, which the most assiduous care had provoked into growing on the sandy soil, served rather to evoke the sigh of pity than to give delight to the beholder. Nor were the inner appointments of the house one whit more pleasing. The old, worn furniture, which, patch and darn as one might, would still look old and worn—the little ornaments, wrought by female fingers out of the merest trifles, the few, faded pictures, the antiquated volumes in the old-fashioned book-case, and the vases, with their bouquets of wild flowers, were all true indexes, both to the character and circumstances of the inmates of the dwelling. All betokened refinement and taste, yet at the same time suggested extreme poverty. Hope's mother was sitting on the piazza sewing as our heroine entered the gate. Mrs. Caldwell was a mild, patient-looking lady, with dark eyes and hair, whose whole appearance indicated that she had seen deep sorrow, but had struggled to bear her burden uncomplainingly, and had learned to be resigned to the will of the Heavenly Father. Hope kissed her good evening, then sat down near her to read her letters, handing her mother the magazine as she did so. Her countenance passed through quite a variety of changes as she perused the first one. It was difficult to tell which expression was uppermost, whether that of surprise, joy or perplexity. Yet there was nothing extraordinary in the letter. It was simply an application for her services as a teacher. It was written by an old acquaintance of her father, who was authorized by a committee to offer her a certain salary to take charge of the school in their neighborhood. The sum offered was moderate, yet to Hope, who was very poor, and who had never earned five dollars in her life, the terms seemed quite

liberal. After reading, she silently handed the letter to her mother. The latter perused it carefully, and when she had finished it inquired: "Have you any idea of accepting this offer, Hope?" "That depends upon two circumstances, mother. In the first place, I must have your *free consent* to it; in the next, if I leave, you will have to have some trusty person to stay with you—some one who is anxious for a home, and who will be a companion for you for a small consideration. But whom can you get?" The second letter she read that evening contained a solution of the problem. It was from Mr. Caldwell's first cousin, an orphan girl, named Mary Caldwell, who was, she wrote, "without a home, and wished to stay at Mrs. Caldwell's, She was willing to work, but disliked the idea of hiring herself out, and would gladly do *as much* work for *less* wages, if saved the humiliation of being considered a servant. Hope and her mother were well acquainted with her, and liked her very much. "If you are *willing* for me to leave *this* settles the question of a *companion*," said Hope. "You can employ Mary, giving her her board and a small salary, and as there is so little housekeeping to do here, she can take in sewing and make a nice living, and besides, she can help me with my wardrobe before I go away. It really seems providential that we heard from her just now." Hope's mother, having given her consent to this arrangement, the daughter wrote to Mary at once, urging her to come on, and to come immediately. To Mr. Watkins, the gentleman who had written to her in regard to the school, she returned an answer accepting the situation. There were no references given and none required on either side, as Hope's father had been an intimate acquaintance of Mr. Watkins, though fully ten years had elapsed since any of the family had heard from him, and how he came to know much about her since her childhood, or ought about her place of abode, was a matter only for conjecture. Hope did not remember him, as she had never seen him

since her recollection. Her injunction to Mary Caldwell "to come on at once" was so literally complied with, and so industriously did they all bestir themselves *after* she came, that in ten days from the August evening when we first met Hope Caldwell she was in perfect readiness to leave home and take her school. No one would have guessed what an amount of work it took to remodel old dresses and make them look like new, to fix over old hats into a fashionable shape, and trim them prettily with inexpensive materials, to darn up old laces and make dainty ties of them, to model new collars out of the merest scraps of linen, to turn antiquated white dresses into coquettish-looking aprons, whose every darn was concealed by some extra trimming or a bow of ribbon ; no one, we say, would have guessed the amount of work expended on Hope's wardrobe during the week of preparation for her trip. *One* new dress and some new trimming for her best hat was all she could afford to purchase just now. For the rest, a graceful form and a tasteful arrangement of what attire she possessed, must supply every deficiency. Her mother had a few articles of jewelry, which had long been in her family, and from which not even poverty had forced her to part, and these she now, for the first time, placed in Hope's temporary possession. And really, our heroine had no misgivings in regard to her appearance, nor to the impression that she would make on strangers, as she stood before the mirror, in the cheap but exquisitely fitting travelling dress which she was to wear on her trip. Before she leaves, however, we will give our readers a brief sketch of her past life, which will the better prepare them to appreciate her future career.

CHAPTER II.

Hope Caldwell's childhood was passed amid scenes very unlike those amid which we first beheld her. Her father—a prosperous merchant—spared no pains in rendering his home not only comfortable, but elegant, and she was during her early years accustomed to every luxury. But his tenderness for his only child was not allowed to interfere with the discipline which he deemed necessary to her future welfare, and the intellectual tasks which she was required to perform, though not quite beyond her reach, were always sufficiently hard to render severe effort necessary to accomplish them. Naturally studious and ambitious, Hope scarcely deemed this a hardship, and when not over fourteen years old she was first in all her classes at school, bearing away prizes from those much older than herself. From the Academy near her home she was sent to a noted institution in another State, where her talent and industry promised her a high position among her schoolmates. Unfortunately for her, before she had been there many months her father failed in business and was unable to continue her at school after the present session was out. Indeed, his reduced circumstances did not justify him in giving her any advantages whatever. This was a bitter disappointment to her, but she bore up bravely under it. She continued her studies as best she could at home, devoting herself especially to drawing, which was her favorite study, and for which she had more than ordinary talent. But studying without a teacher was very unlike the routine of the school-room, and Hope felt the difference. She missed, too, the luxuries to which she had been accustomed from infancy, and altogether her life was sadly changed from what it had once been. It was about two years after her father's failure in business, and while

she was still struggling on in this unsatisfactory manner, that Robert St. George first became acquainted with her. He was young, well-bred and handsome, and in a very short time after their first introduction he began to pay her marked attention, and finally addressed her. In an evil hour Hope listened to his vows of unchanging affection, and gave her heart to the charming stranger. In after years he would have never been her choice, but now, in her young girlhood, he seemed to her perfection. For a time she forgot ambition, forgot poverty, forgot her studies, ceased to remember everything except the blissful reflection that she loved Robert and was beloved by him. For six months she dwelt in a fool's Paradise, she lived for her lover, thought, dreamed and planned for him alone. They were betrothed in the winter, but did not expect to marry within a year after. At the expiration of the spring after their betrothal, Hope received a letter from one of her schoolmates, announcing her intention of spending the summer at Mr. Caldwell's. Had her father been in prosperous circumstances our heroine would have hailed these tidings with unalloyed pleasure. But in the present straitened condition of his affairs it must be owned that the whole family would have been better pleased at the absence of their expected guest than they were with the anticipation of her coming. Still there was nothing left for Hope to do except to urge her to pay the intended visit. Amelia Montcalm, for that was her name, had been somewhat of a favorite with Hope at school. She was beautiful, stylish and fascinating, and apparently a warm friend of our heroine's. Her parents were wealthy, and she had had many advantages. As, radiant with smiles, she alighted from the vehicle in which she had come from the depot, on the evening of her arrival at Mr. Caldwell's, she was, indeed, a vision of rare loveliness, more beautiful than ever, it seemed to her friend. Hope's parents were charmed with her, and welcomed her, with frank hospi-

talities, to their home. Much care and pains had been bestowed upon their present humble residence to make it as pleasant as possible during her sojourn with them. Mrs. Caldwell and her daughter had worked hard to accomplish this object, and Mr. Caldwell had almost exhausted his slender resources in procuring little additional comforts for their guest. Yet a bitter pang of disappointment struck Amelia as she surveyed the home of her friend, with its humble appointments. She had imagined Mr. Caldwell very wealthy, and had anticipated having a gay time during the summer at some grand old country mansion. Great, indeed, was her chagrin at finding everything so different from what she had pictured it. Hope, in her frank way, told her of the change in Mr. Caldwell's fortune, and Amelia's apparent sympathy with her, and her show of delight at all of her surroundings, endeared her more than ever to the heart of her friend. Yet, in her own mind, even now, the selfish girl was planning some excuse to shorten her visit. Before she could invent any plausible one, however, Mr. St. George called upon Hope, and Amelia was introduced to him. Her acquaintance with *him* put an end to her thoughts of a speedy departure. She rather fancied Robert's looks and manner, and as she was an accomplished coquette, she thought it probable that she could make a conquest of him. She saw at a glance that he and her friend were lovers—were possibly betrothed—but this, so far from being an obstacle in her path, rather gave a zest to her little sport, for she was never better pleased than when she could win a young man away from another girl. She felt a little spiteful at Hope for finding her poorer than she had anticipated, and it seemed to her but fair to avenge herself by winning the affections of Robert. But this she found a more difficult matter than she had at first imagined. Hope Caldwell's presence, the sweetness of her manners, her splendid intel-

lect, and the childish innocence of her disposition, would seem sufficient to have saved her from the mortification of seeing any other woman usurp her place in her lover's affections. Under ordinary circumstances they *would*, but Amelia was fascinating to the last degree. Beautiful as a Peri, with a voice as sweet as a nightingale's, and possessed, too, in no common degree, of those bewitching ways which charm the hearts of men even more than beauty, few, indeed, could stay in her presence long and come away free from her chains. This was more especially the case with very young men. Robert St. George she found more intractable than her victims generally proved. For awhile he seemed steeled to all of her fascinations. But this only made her more determined to enslave him. She wished to have him bound, as it were, to her chariot wheels, a helpless captive. When she found that ordinary means failed to effect this purpose, she did not scruple to feign herself desperately, hopelessly in love with him. Not in so many words, of course, but by a thousand nameless evidences—the tender glances, the double meaning that she gave to the love songs which she sang, to the poetry which she recited, to the most trifling words that she spoke, her blushes and smiles—ah! who could resist them? Robert *did* resist them all for a long while, but at last he could withstand no more. He drifted away from truth, honor and from the girl whom he had once fondly loved. Innocent as Hope was, she was not so destitute of discernment as not to see the true state of affairs at once. When Robert became so absorbed in Amelia's conversation as almost to forget *her* presence, when he listened to Amelia's voice as though it was an angel's, and gazed upon her face with all a lover's tenderness, could Hope be so blind as not to notice it, so destitute of womanly feeling, as not to groan in the very depths of her heart that she had lost the first love of her life? She was neither blind nor unfeeling, but she was

proud to her heart's core—too proud to avert, even had it been in her power to do so, the dreaded blow which was to destroy the happiness of her young life. Not by word or look would she seek to win her lover back to his allegiance to her. She gave him his freedom unfalteringly, heeded not his feeble apology for his conduct, but, shutting up her grief in her own heart, endeavored to seem her natural self, the more so that she felt that Amelia would triumph in any exhibition of weakness on her part. Suffer as she might she would suffer in secret; the world should not be the wiser for it. From that terrible summer a blight fell over the life of our heroine. She had realized the falsity of friend and lover; she had made “idols and found them clay,” and with her confidence in them had fled her trust in all earthly beings, save her own dear parents. The world was no longer the rosy-hued one of the past, but a dreary abode, overshadowed by leaden clouds, where one must of necessity live, but must live without hope or comfort. We have said that she had a talent for drawing. Under some circumstances it might have proved a source of profit, as well as of pleasure to her, but now it served only to help banish thoughts of the past from her mind. Her chief aim *now* was to procure oblivion of that episode in her life, whose memory she hated above all others. But to forget Robert and Amelia—his fickleness and her falsity—would be well worth the expenditure of much time and trouble. To this end she worked harder than she had ever done before, devoting every moment that she could spare from her household duties to her favorite study. And constant employment had the effect of deadening the pain of reflection, of causing the bitter memories of the past to wax fainter and fainter. By degrees she resumed some of her former cheerfulness. She was not quite the same—who could be under such circumstances?—but she was neither despairing nor melancholy. Yet the child-like trust of

early youth had fled. She grew cold and reserved, and utterly indifferent to the society of the other sex. Ambition took the place of love in her heart. She planned off her future as a successful artist, winning both fame and fortune by her talent—wedded to her art, and indifferent to all else save that and the happiness of her father and mother. What bright air-castles she built, what gorgeous dreams of the future filled all her mental vision ! A practical person could easily have foreseen the end of all this, could have easily told that ambition in this direction, and under the disadvantages which surrounded Hope, would only end in disappointment—would only prove a will-'o-the-wisp, leading her astray from the practical duties of life. In future years she might realize this, in after life might realize that her one talent had proved rather a curse than a blessing to her, and she might then bitterly regret the loss of much precious time that might have been better spent. But not now could she feel thus. For days, weeks and months she lived an ideal life, working hard, yet as one in a dream. A rude shock from the real, practical world, recalled her to herself and to misery again. Her father was taken very ill, and after one week of suffering died, leaving her mother and herself to bear, not only the anguish of bereavement, but the hardships of poverty. A house and lot in Tradeville, the same which we have already described, and a life insurance policy for just a sufficient sum to keep them above actual want, was their all. So the years had gone by, bringing with them no new misfortunes and no new pleasures. Hope saw those inferior in natural endowments to herself living in comfort and luxury, and sometimes she rebelled bitterly, but secretly, against her lot. "Why," thought she, in anguish of spirit, "should other girls, in nowise my superiors, enjoy their lives, be fortunate in all their plans, while every aim of my life has been thwarted ? I believe an unlucky

star presides over my destiny." Had she been more thoughtful she would have perceived that she in part governed her own destiny, as does every one. Her reserve, her exclusiveness, and the singularity of her disposition, tended to repel those who might otherwise have admired and loved her. But for a long time she was unconscious of this. Out of her study hours she took recreation by long strolls, sometimes accompanied by her mother, at others by a little child of one of the neighbors, and at rare intervals she went visiting or to church. In her walks she studied nature in all of its varied phases, and enriched her cabinet and herbarium by many a gathered treasure. Of course this kind of a life had the effect of rendering her entirely different from other young ladies. She knew less of the world, less of gossip and more of the lore of the past, and though not happy, she was at least free from those tumultuous emotions which agitate the bosoms of many who mingle freely in society. Still, with one so young, a life like this was not likely to last. So long as she was sanguine of success in the future, Hope could content herself with this hermit-like seclusion; but when, after the lapse of five years from the time when she had left school, she had never, in a single one of her sketches, attained to her ideal of perfection, she began to lose heart. Forms of beauty flitted before her eyes, wanting but the labor of her hand to embody them, yet ever did the attempt prove delusive. She lacked opportunity; unaided talent seldom accomplishes any great result; the best of artists have generally been assisted and instructed in their art. Hope was no genius, but she possessed talent enough to fill her whole soul with yearnings after the perfect, and to cause others to admire the paintings and drawings whose deficiencies she bemoaned to herself. After working hard for several hours one day on a sketch, without succeeding as she wished, she threw down her pencil for the time

completely discouraged. "Would to Heaven," she soliloquized, "that I had not been cursed with this fatal gift; would that I had been a good seamstress, or housekeeper, or had loved some practical duty, instead of being so passionately devoted to what seems destined to allure me on to wretchedness!" For a short time after this she gave herself exclusively to household duties; she cooked, milked, churned and sewed, and, as she confessed to her mother, she really felt better contented. She began, too, to visit a little oftener, and thus learned to form a different estimate of others. She found herself striving to interest and please others, and was not only successful in her object, but found that the effort gave her real pleasure. People were glad to have her visit them, the more so that she had heretofore been a little exclusive. An occasional gleam of mirth beautified her face wonderfully; and many persons remarked on her loveliness who had hitherto not regarded her as pretty. It was at this period of her life, when she was about twenty-one years old, that she received Mr. Watkins' letter. Strange to say, it had never occurred to Hope that she could teach, and thus earn her own money. Her time had been so absorbed in her favorite pursuit that this idea had not once suggested itself to her mind. But Mr. Watkins' letter was like a revelation to her. She could teach and earn money, she could make herself useful, she could go among different scenes and among different people; she would strive to render herself just as pleasant as possible, and she would succeed. She could buy new books and new furniture, she could add to her mother's comfort, and possibly in a year or two she could make money enough to send herself to school one session more, where she could take drawing lessons again, under a good master, and as time elapsed she would realize all of those longings after fame and fortune which had long been hers. She saw herself in the near future a successful artist, not

only renowned, but in prosperous circumstances, happy in gratified ambition and in the society of her beloved mother. All of these delightful visions passed rapidly through her mind after the reception of Mr. Watkins' letter. It was the "open sesame" to a region of enchantment. A slender foundation, it would appear to others, on which to base such sanguine expectations, but it must be remembered that Hope was young and a stranger to worldly wisdom. She did not look on the difficulties in her path just now; she thought only of the pleasure which even a small addition to her very limited means would afford her. She was in such high spirits, as she reflected upon it, that her mother mildly rebuked her for her gayety :

"I believe you like the idea of leaving home, Hope, and of bidding *me adieu*."

"No, no, mother," she exclaimed, impulsively, flinging her arms about her mother's neck, "but I have suffered in my past life, God only knows *how much*, and I am glad to change it."

Mrs. Caldwell kissed her again and again. "Poor Hope," she said, "I did not dream that you were so discontented. I thought you comparatively happy in the midst of your quiet employments."

"I did *try* to be, but Oh, mother, it was so hard to bear it all resignedly." She burst into a flood of tears—the first that she had shed in her mother's presence since her return from her father's funeral.

Mrs. Caldwell soothed her with gentle caresses and with words of holy cheer, and she soon had the satisfaction of seeing her not wildly gay, but with a contented smile resting on her countenance. And during the remainder of her stay at home she appeared contented and happy.

CHAPTER III.

It was the night before Hope's departure from home to take charge of her school. Her preparations for her journey were all complete, her trunk packed and a way engaged to convey her to the depot early on the morrow. She expected to take the train there and to proceed on her journey alone. Mrs. Caldwell and Mary, who were much fatigued, retired at an early hour, but Hope was too sad and excited to fall asleep at once. She sat at her window and looked out on the glories of the summer night, but beheld them with gloomy, discontented feelings. Never had she before realized what a charm invests even the *humblest* home. Just as she was about to leave hers it suddenly became the dearest place on earth to her. The old, shabby furniture, the sickly flowers, the antiquated volumes in the old-fashioned book-case, the faded-out pictures around the room, the tabby cat, the cow that she milked every night and morning, the lofty pines in sight of her home—all the little mementoes of other and happier days—now seemed to her as so many friends, to whom she was bidding adieu, perhaps for the last time. Yet what were these to the society of that dear mother, whose tender care had been hers all of her life? For a brief while she almost blamed herself for ever even *thinking* of separating from her mother. But this regret was but momentary. Would not her mother as well as herself be benefited by their brief absence from each other? Could she not secure some comforts to her by the sacrifice? And of what avail would regret now be? No! come what might, her resolve was taken, and she would not swerve from it. "No such word as fail," she murmured to herself; but even as she spoke the sound of music was wafted to her ears, and sweet

as was the sound, it served, just now, to touch a discordant chord in her nature. She knew the performers well. They were a young gentleman and lady, supposed to be lovers, who were playing the violin and piano in unison. The thought of their happiness, though no mean envy nestled in her heart, seemed to intensify her gloomy feelings by sheer force of contrast. Other girls, not more richly endowed by nature than herself, were blessed, having pleasant homes and some one to love and care for them, while she was poor and unnoticed, having no one, save her mother, to take any interest in her. She leaned her head down on the casement and wept bitterly. Tears relieved the burden at her heart, but she reproached herself for being so foolish :

"I am getting really envious," she exclaimed to herself, "I must not give up, but endeavor to conquer such feelings, or my disposition will be utterly ruined. I will *not give up* to gloom and discontent. I will look on the bright side of life, come what may."

She listened to the music until a late hour—listened with rather softened feelings—yet was still far, very far, from being contented with her lot. Ambition is a foe to happiness, and in the heart of our heroine it had long reigned supreme. Until it was exorcised she could never enjoy *lasting* peace nor satisfaction.

The morning came, and she rose up from a pillow steeped in tears to begin her journey. There was a sad parting between her and her mother, though she crushed back her tears in that mother's *presence*—a kindly good-bye to Mary, a caressing touch of the hand even to the house-cat, a momentary farewell glance at each familiar object of her home, and Hope turned her steps from its threshold to go forth into the world *alone*. Alone! yet *not* alone, for who can be really alone when followed by the prayers of a pious mother? Ah! who, indeed! She had a disagreeable ride

to the depot, which was about twenty miles distant. Her route lay over sandy roads, crossed by black, sluggish creeks, and bounded on either side by interminable forests of pine. There were a few scattered farm-houses along the way ; aside from these the prospect was extremely monotonous. Her escort—an unlettered country lad, was by no means entertaining ; her reflections were rather gloomy, and it was with a feeling of intense relief that she saw the railroad, and felt that this, the first part of her journey, was at an end. The train was not yet in hearing ; she had plenty of time to buy her ticket, and was beginning to be a little impatient waiting at the depot, when the shrill shriek of the locomotive was heard, and her escort got on the track and signaled for the train to stop. In a minute it had come to a halt, her baggage was deposited safely on board, and she herself snugly ensconced in the ladies' car near a window. Once fairly on her way, and speeding along swiftly, farther and farther from home and mother, she felt indescribably lonely. She was going among strangers, going, too, to engage in a profession for which she thought she had no special turn, and one which was entirely new to her. Her heart grew sick and faint at the reflection. For one moment she regretted the step that she had taken, on the next the proverb, "nothing venture nothing have" crossed her mind, and she felt sure that she had acted right in trying to better her condition, even though it cost her present sacrifice. At least, she reflected, it will make home seem dearer to me, and I shall be better contented upon my return ; and, anxious to banish disagreeable thoughts, she began to amuse herself by looking out of the car window at the swiftly-moving panorama without. But there was too much monotony in the scenes for them to prove very attractive. Stretches of meadow land, dotted with wild flowers and an endless succession of chipped pine trees, their bodies looking white and ghastly

in the summer sunlight ; such were the prominent features of the landscape, varied occasionally by the transient glimpse of a winding stream or a fleeting view, sometimes of a lowly hut, at others of a comfortable farm-house. At every depot there was a crowd of loafers, both white and colored, waiting the arrival of the train, as some relief to the monotony of a thriftless existence. Weary of a prospect which had but little interest for her, Hope took a magazine from her valise and began to read. A piece by an author whose *nom de plume* was familiar to her, attracted her attention. She had read a volume of poetry by the same person, which, though seemingly unappreciated by the public, was fancied by *her* for its singularity. She had seen but one copy of the book, but retained that in her own possession, wondering why others could not feel its charm as she did. The piece she now read was entitled :

“ PASSING THOUGHTS; OR, THE VANITY OF LIFE,”

It ran as follows :

“ I have looked abroad o'er all the world,
Have thought, until my brain grew dizzy with
The toil of thinking, of the mysteries
Which encompass all our being ; the strange,
Deep problems, which pass unnoticed by
The multitude, and but serve to mock the
Few who toil in their solution. From our
Couch of rest, we in the morning rise, to
Eat and drink, and work and play, and buy and
Sell, to see the same scenes, and hear the same
Sounds we did on yesterday ; and *then*, we
Go to sleep again. And this dull routine
We pursue for years ; varied perchance by
Some slight change, as marriage to the single,
Or danger and distress to those who were
At ease, but with naught to lift us up above
Earth, and our earth-born cares—our worldly joys.
'Vanity of vanities, saith the

Preacher,' and rightly hath he said, for the
World is nothing else. Its joys are fleeting
As a shadow ; its fruits, like those of the sad
Dead Sea, ' turning to ashes on the lips.'
By the moth are all its treasures eaten,
Or else by rust corrupted. Its fame is
But as ' sounding brass or tinkling cymbal,'
And happiness, the gift for which we pine,
Nowhere is found, though sought for night and day.
The years go on ; merry or sad, in health
Or sickness spent, it matters not ; still, with
Unceasing flow, the sands of life are through
The hour-glass running, and age is stealing
Like a thief upon us, robbing us of
All the brightness of our early days ; the
Lightness of our step, and the magic charm
Which, though illusory, once made even
This dim, dull earth an Eden seem.
The heart grows hard and less trusting ; child-like
Confidence is lost, and squint-eyed, doubting
Suspicion takes its place. Experience
Has taught the folly of a too ready
Belief in others. The once liberal
Hand, closed by the selfish lessons of
Its teacher—worldly wisdom—grips with a
Tighter grasp the yellow gold. The man
Worships most devoutly at the shrine of
Mammon, e'en though the name of Christ he bears ;
Of Christ, the meek and lowly, who, when once
Tempted, despised the riches of the
World, and warned his followers 'gainst the
Love of Mammon. Oh ! I have learned to
Hate the world—the world, with all its falsehood ;
Its smooth tongue, and base, black heart ; its flower
Crowned cup, brimming with poisoned, but
With sparkling wine ; its heavenly smile,
Veiling hate deep as hell ; its Judas kiss,
Meant but to betray ; its cringing bow to
Yellow gold ; its scorn of poverty and
Toil ; its readiness to join all causes,
Right or wrong, so but the many follow ;
Its hunting down the weak, till life is fled ;
Its robbery under the cloak of justice ;

In short, its long, long list of bitter, deep,
And damning sins, each black as Erebus,
All proving that the heart of man is as
Scripture hath declared, 'above all things
Deceitful, and desperately wicked.'
But more even than I hate the world have
I learned to loathe *myself*, so changed
Am I from the light-hearted boy that once
I was; so worn and old before my time.
For life was not always *thus* with me. I
Have known the day when perpetual
Youth seemed resting on the world; my way
Strewn with flowers imperaled by morning's
Dew. The sky o'ershaded by no clouds save
Those which gave its azure a diviner
Blue. Earth smiled like Heaven, while vistas
Of interminable pleasure stretched
Away before my raptured gaze. My
Spirit was as bright and buoyant as a
Young eagle's, when first he learns his power
To soar beyond the clouds and gaze upon
The glorious sun unblenching. There was
Not one, on the broad face of the earth, for whom
My heart felt a throb of hate or touch of
Scorn. My being was too full of perfect love,
Too brimming o'er with purest happiness.
Now *all* is changed; how sadly changed!
For I have felt the bitter rod of sore,
Perchance, deserved chastisement; round my
Heart have settled the ashes of dark and
Mighty desolation; or to approach
A little nearer truth, round *what is left*
Of what was *once* my heart; for the fierce fire
Of affliction, in burning up the dross,
Has well nigh consumed the whole of what
I deemed a large, good heart, and I seem
To myself worse, worse a thousandfold than
In the old bright days when life was one long
Dream of bliss, and I sang for joy like a
Glad, free bird, winging the air unharmed.
Now, like the same bird, wounded by huntsman's
Shot, I creep off to myself, would I *could*

Say to die. So vain is life, so little
Profit is there in living under the
Sun ; in lengthening out our mortal days
To long, long years of wretchedness ; but to
See the morning star of promise fade from
Our sky, and dark clouds gather round our eve."

It was with an interest, not at all excited by any *beauty* of style or *display* of *talent* in the author, that Hope read the piece which we have just quoted. The writer seemed to be so like *herself*, and expressed in words so nearly the thoughts which had often arisen in her own mind, and there was, too, such an outburst of utter wretchedness depicted in his description of himself, that she felt a strange sympathy for him. That there was much egotism in it was excusable only in the *miserable*. She could understand perhaps better than most others the composal of a poem in which *self* figured so largely. It was like the cry of one racked by physical pain and in too much agony to think of aught but self and selfish needs. She found herself wondering if the author's life had been like *hers*, and if not, of what grief was gnawing like a worm at his heart. She felt a vague, dreamy wish that she could in some way "minister to a mind diseased," and "with some sweet, oblivious antidote" charm away the pain that was weighing the spirit down to earth. While she was *thinking* the train was speeding on its way, and two hours' travel brought her to the town where she was to change cars. There was the usual amount of bustle and confusion at the depot; friends crowding around the train to meet returning friends, boys with fruits, confectioneries, or newspapers for sale, porters anxious for a job, and the inevitable crowd of loafers, with no business save to kill time.

Hope was but little accustomed to travelling, and it was a relief to her when she found herself safe out of the crowd and in the parlor of the hotel, where she had to wait for

the arrival of the train which she was to take next. She procured her ticket and amused herself as best she could watching the shifting crowd on the street; but felt, "Ah! so alone!" Since morning it seemed to her that she had drifted away from all that she had ever known or cared for. Home was only a few hours travel from her, yet it seemed immeasurably distant. A great gulf appeared to yawn between her and all that she loved. No matter what might happen, she was among strangers now—no one knew or cared for her. The coming of the train roused her from her reverie. Hastily gathering up her book and lunch basket, and giving her valise and bundles to a servant to carry, she hurried to the cars, and was not many minutes too early.

The country through which she now passed was a little different from that which lay along her morning's route. There were fewer chipped pine trees, more farming land; altogether it was a more attractive-looking section than that over which she had just travelled. It had none of the grand scenery of a mountain region, yet it was pretty and picturesque.

With a beating heart Hope thought of her meeting so soon with her strange employer. Though he was an old acquaintance of her father's and stood well in society, yet how could she tell whether she would fancy his ways or he hers? And even if *he* was perfection, his family might be quite different from him. Revolving these thoughts in her mind, and getting every moment more and more excited, she felt that she would give much if the dreaded encounter was over. The train blew as a signal to stop—the conductor assisted her down the step, where a kindly-looking, blue-eyed, middle-aged gentleman stood waiting for her, who introduced himself to her as Mr. Watkins, and in a minute all of her fears were set at rest, so cordial and friendly was the manner of her employer. Whatever the

future might bring forth, Hope felt assured that she would never be deceived in one with such an open, honest countenance as that of Mr. Watkins. A mountain of suspense seemed lifted from her heart ; she felt almost happy.

"Wait just one moment, Miss Caldwell," said Mr. Watkins. "I will have my buggy round here directly ; meanwhile I will introduce you to my little son Willie, and he called a little, fair-skinned, blue-eyed boy, who was standing off a short distance from him, and said :

"Willie, this is your new teacher, Miss Caldwell. I want you to stay here with her until I go to the house after my horse and buggy."

Willie obeyed this command so cheerfully as to render himself very entertaining to Hope during Mr. Watkins' brief absence. He informed her that "the house where Mr. Watkins had gone was his *cousin's* ; that they had been waiting nearly an hour for her ; that the shoes he had on were *all* that he had ; that his brother Jamie, however, had *two* pair ; that his mother had raised one hundred and fifty chickens that year, and that his father had sold thirty dollars worth of watermelons ; also that their grapes were ripe and he would give *her* some as soon as they got home. Hope, though unaccustomed to children, had a natural tact for pleasing them, and the two seemed on such friendly terms upon Mr. Watkins' return that he exclaimed : "Well, I declare, you are fast friends already. I am glad of it ;" then, addressing himself to Hope, he said :

"Now, Miss Caldwell, I will just assist you in the buggy and tie your trunk on behind, and then we will start."

On the way he pointed out various objects of interest to her. On one side of the road a little battle had been fought during the late civil war, and relics of the struggle might still be found. Hope admired the country. It was certainly more attractive looking than Tradeville, and her

first ride through it was quite pleasant, though she was wondering all the time what kind of a woman Mrs. Watkins would prove to be, and whether she would like *her* as well as she did her husband and child. She pictured to herself a staid, matronly lady of forty or thereabouts, possibly pleasant, but not *her* companion in point of age or feeling. When they reached Mr. Watkins' place, which, though small, was pleasant looking, and which had a lovely flower-garden in front of the house, a girlish-looking, blue-eyed little woman was standing at the gate waiting for them, and before Hope could decide whether she was the *child* or *wife* of Mr. Watkins, she was introduced to her by that gentleman as Mrs. Watkins. With a winning smile the lady bade her welcome, invited her in the house, and contrived in so short a time to make our heroine feel entirely *at home*, that she lost all thought of the shortness of their acquaintance, and chatted away so merrily as almost to surprise herself. The two children whom Hope had not yet seen soon entered the room. The eldest was a manly little fellow, some ten years old, who had had the misfortune to lose his left eye; the youngest a fair-skinned, blue-eyed, golden-haired darling—a cherub seldom seen out of a picture. Hope fell in love with her at once.

At supper she was introduced to the last member of this pleasant family circle. He was an employe of Mr. Watkins—a young man who clerked for him—a brown-eyed, curly-haired youth, some eighteen years old, whom Hope thought rather handsome and pleasant in manner.

She spent an agreeable evening with her new friends, and when, after the regular family worship was over, she was shown to her room, she could not possibly realize that she had just known them for a few short hours. Though much fatigued, she did not at once fall asleep. The past day seemed so strange to her, the morning so far removed from the night, the various incidents of the day so mingled in

her mind, that it required an effort on her part to believe that it was all *real*, and not a creation of her own imagination. When at last she sank to sleep, the events of the last twenty-four hours haunted her dreams, and Mr. and Mrs. Watkins and the little clerk were strangely confounded with the author of "Passing Thoughts," whom she fancied in dreamland, she had met in *one* of her new friends—she could not tell *which*.

CHAPTER IV.

When Hope awoke the morning after her arrival at her new home, it was with an undefined impression of *some change* having come over her life, but *what* she could not at first imagine. It was not until she glanced around the apartment and surveyed the different articles of furniture in the room that she recalled to mind where she was and the occurrences of yesterday. She lay in bed awhile, thinking over her trip and wondering what the future might have in store for her, but still with no great anxiety connected with her musings. She had a restful feeling of being at home and among friends, which *before* leaving her mother's roof, she did not believe possible for *her* to experience among *strangers*. After she arose, made a careful toilet and straightened up her apartment, as was her habit, she walked out in the flower-garden, where some flowers were still in bloom. Her exercise in the open air gave her an appetite for the nice breakfast smoking on the table, which she enjoyed, along with the lively chat around the social board. Mr. and Mrs. Watkins seemed to vie with each other as to which should make the wittiest and

merriest speeches, and their mirth was contagious. Hope found herself laughing gayly, and wondered at the change which had come over her feelings. She soon ascertained that the school would not begin for a week yet, and that she would have plenty of time for rest and also to make new acquaintances before entering upon her duties as a teacher. The school-house was to have some repairs made to it ere it could be occupied, and it would probably take a week to complete them. All this was told her at the breakfast table. Hope did not *regret* it, but she had a great desire to see her school and scholars.

The week passed away very quietly. The neighbors, though living near, seemed in no haste to call on her, and Mrs. Watkins was busy with her domestic duties much of the time, and had to be out of the room, and so Hope was thrown upon her own resources for entertainment. She was at no loss, however. She wrote to her mother; did fancy work; arranged and re-arranged her apartment; read such books as she had brought with her, and contrived not to get home-sick nor low-spirited, though a *part* of the time did not fly by on fairy wing. At meal times they were merry and social enough, and at night after supper the family, together with Hope, would sit out on the piazza in the moonlight and chat and sing until bedtime. The little clerk, whose name was Robert King, was friendly but bashful, and as Hope did not suit a bashful boy very well, it seemed destined that they should be a little distant to each other for some time to come. In the future they might be familiar friends, but it was not *her* disposition to make the *advance* toward any nearer acquaintanceship with anyone. On the Sabbath Hope went to preaching in the little town about four miles distant from them. The ride thither was very pleasant. The sultry, summer weather had given place to the more agreeable temperature of the early Autumn; the leaves were

changing their green color to gorgeous hues of crimson, purple and gold, and the deep blue sky seemed to bend lovingly over the richly attired earth. The streams sparkled like silver in the sunlight ; gentle breezes stirred the tree tops ; splendid wild flowers were visible on every side ; an atmosphere of blessedness seemed to pervade everything. Hope could not withstand the sweet influences of the morning. She possessed a nature that was exquisitely susceptible to every touch of joy, and *she was* passionately fond of beauty, and just now a strange peace and satisfaction filled her whole being ; she was *for the time happy*. Who, after all, is not *blessed*, when in the enjoyment of perfect health, of the fresh air and gentle sunshine ? Yet in the toil after wealth or fame, amid the petty cares and struggles of life, how forgetful are we of those glorious gifts which are among the richest of those bestowed upon man by a bountiful Creator.

A new pleasure was in store for Hope when she arrived at the church. The preacher upon this occasion was a gentleman who used to be pastor of the church of which her father was a member, and was one whose voice she had often heard in prayer around the fireside at her father's house. Memories, sad but sweet, were stirred by this unexpected glimpse of one who was so intimately associated with the recollections of her childhood and early youth. His sermon was an able one, but she scarcely hearkened to it. Unconsciously to herself, she was drifting back to the past years of her life ; to the happy time when Fortune smiled upon them ; when her father was yet with them ; when hope was high within her heart, and when she foresaw *no* cloud in the bright sky of her future. She half forgot for a moment the terrible, crushing realities which had taken the place of all the glorious things which a too sanguine imagination had prophesied. Just as she *had foreseen* the future, so now did she *look back* upon the past

through the *delusive glass* of fancy. For, as bright as it was, *compared with her present life*, its flowers were not so thornless, nor its paths so smooth, as she now imagined them to have been.

After services were over she waited with Mr. and Mrs. Watkins until Mr. Long, for that was the preacher's name, made his way slowly down the aisle to the pew where they sat. She enjoyed his start of surprise and the expression of gladness which passed over his face as, after a momentary gaze he recognized her.

"My dear Miss Hope!" he exclaimed, "I did not dream of seeing you here to-day. I did not observe you while speaking. What fortunate wind has wafted you thither?"

"I came as a teacher in Mr. Watkins' neighborhood," she replied.

"A teacher! well, I am *really* surprised. The last time I saw you, you were a school-girl; but that has been several years ago. Time flies so rapidly that we do not realize the swiftness of his flight until we witness the changes he has wrought. Well, since we are so near together I hope to see you often. My wife will be charmed to meet with you and will visit you as soon as she can; but you must not wait for *her*, if you have an opportunity of calling on us, for she has a crowd of little ones to look after and has very little time for visiting. I trust that your school may prosper, and that you may *like* the profession, for I suppose it is new to you."

"Yes, sir, this is my *first* attempt at teaching."

"Really; then you will have more difficulties to contend with than fall to the lot of an experienced teacher. But you need not be discouraged. There are *two* sources of strength upon which we can rely with unwavering confidence in hours of trials. These are: *God* and a *strong will*."

These last words haunted Hope upon her homeward

route. She did not lack for determination, but her own heart bore witness to the truth that she did not often go to the Lord for help in her troubles.

The Sabbath evening brought several visitors to Mr. Watkins', and though at heart Hope did not approve of visiting on the Lord's day, yet she felt less lonely in the presence of visitors. Robert King, whose bashfulness was beginning to wear away, was quite chatty and agreeable ; her girl visitors, whose names were respectively Mary and Hattie Stuart, were very pretty and pleasant, and the two young men who were with them were well bred and rather intelligent. The one who bore the name of Daniel Young was more than ordinarily handsome, and though over thirty years' old, did not look a year over twenty-five. The other young man was not so handsome, yet our heroine *liked* him better. There was such an expression of honesty and candor in the clear, blue eyes of Nathan Alison, such a manly look about his face and figure, that one was involuntarily impressed with a firm belief that he was *all* that his face bespoke for him.

The conversation that evening turned on a variety of topics. Hope's trip ; the difference in the appearance of the country around her present home and that in which Tradeville was situated ; the sermon of the morning ; the beauties of Nature ; the loveliness of the autumnal day, were subjects which were all discussed in turn. Then her visitors expressed a wish that Hope would not get homesick, and advised her to enjoy herself as much as possible at every opportunity.

"You will find this quite a sociable neighborhood, Miss Caldwell," said Hattie Stuart. "There are a plenty of young people around here, and we have pic-nics and fishing parties, private theatricals and amateur concerts quite often, and really, though it *is* a country neighborhood, the time passes away quite swiftly. I do hope you may have a good time when you are here."

Hope, though generally rather reserved, was too kind-hearted herself, and too grateful for kindness in others, to withstand the interest which her new friends seemed to take in her. She thanked them for their good wishes, and said that "she did not doubt but that she would enjoy herself if *all* the people of the neighborhood were as pleasant as those she had already met."

"You are a young-looking teacher, Miss Caldwell," remarked Mary Stuart; "I presume this is your first experience in that line of business, is it not?"

"Yes," answered Hope, "and you cannot imagine how I dread the *first* day of school. If *that* were over, I do not think I should mind the rest."

"Yes, *I can imagine* your feelings," said Hattie Stuart, laughing. "Believe me, I would not be a teacher for all the world contains. I would sooner hoe corn and collards for a living. I can remember too well how we girls used to contrive plans to provoke our teachers, and alas! too often our efforts in that direction proved a brilliant success. I would shudder at the bare thought of having my patience so tried."

"Yes," said Hope, thoughtfully, "I believe myself it requires patience to succeed in teaching; but does it not to succeed in *everything else* of importance?"

"I suppose so," replied the girl, "but *I* never stick at *anything* long enough to get tired of it."

"I think we have the same motto, Miss Hattie," said Daniel Young. "Let us eat, drink and be merry, and leave others to *toil* as much as they see fit."

"That *may do*," said Hope, "for those who can afford it, but some are bound to work in order that *others may enjoy ease*." It was as much as to say, "the honey bees must work for the drones."

Hattie Stuart laughed, as she did at *nearly everything* that was said, but Daniel Young winced a little at Hope's

speech, as unintentional as was any personal hit or allusion on her part. She was merely looking at the world in a practical point of view—at the toiling masses wearing out soul and body for the ease-loving few to enjoy the fruits of other's labor and hardship.

Nathan Alison, sturdy young farmer that he was, took Hope's side of the question :

"You are right, Miss Caldwell," he said, *some are compelled* to work and endure privation that others may enjoy themselves, and yet I think that those who are employed are the happier. The rust of idleness is worse than the wear of toil."

Conversation on this subject soon flagged, however, and turned on other themes, and after spending quite a pleasant evening, the visitors took their departure, with promises of calling again soon, and with many solicitations to Hope to visit them.

"I will send brother after you any time you will promise to come," said Hattie. "Come some Saturday or Friday evening and stay till Monday morning, and we will have a nice time. I am very anxious for father and mother to see you."

"Thank you," replied Hope, "I should be most happy to see them, and certainly intend visiting you if I possibly can." Then they made their adieus, and the new acquaintances separated mutually pleased with each other. When they had left and Mr. Watkins and his wife had gone off to their respective employments, Hope was alone and in deep thought. She reviewed all the events of the past day—her unexpected meeting with her father's old pastor, her acquaintanceship with her newly-found friends, all of the pleasures of this pleasant Sabbath, and she felt thankful for the mercies of the day, and caught herself building up air-castles for the future. All of the agreeable occurrences of the day seemed like a resurrection of a small

part of that happiness which she *had* firmly believed laid in the grave forever, and encouraged her to hope that in the far future there might still be some joy in store for her. What if, after all, every fond dream of the past might be realized, all at least of her anticipations in regard to *wealth* and *fame*. As for love, she felt assured that never for *that could* there be a resurrection in her heart. Its very ashes had grown *too cold* for the breath of mortal ever to kindle that sacred flame again. But if wealth, fame, friends were hers she would be perfectly contented. So, at least, she *thought*, and the September sun sank below the horizon, and "twilight grey had in its sober livery all things clad," ere she ceased indulging in the delightful employment of castle-building and rejoined the family at supper.

CHAPTER V.

"Well, Miss Hope," said Mr. Watkins, on the Monday morning when her school was to begin, "I trust you may get on with your scholars without difficulty, but I forewarn you that you may expect many trials and vexations as a teacher, not only from the stubbornness and idleness of scholars, but also from the interference of ignorant or mistaken parents. I have taught school myself, and know whereof I speak. There is one little child who I expect will be a pupil of yours, with whom I fear you will have considerable trouble. His parents are extremely illiterate people, and belong to the very lowest class, and he has had no training except in evil, and bears the name of being a very bad boy. His father likes me, however, and I hated to see his boy grow up without the slightest chance for an education, and so persuaded him to send Johnnie to school,

but I have, on *your account*, *almost* regretted it since, for I fear it will scarcely be good treatment to you to inflict such a nuisance on you."

"Never mind," said Hope, cheerily, "we will first see if nothing *can be done* to improve him ere giving him up as a reprobate."

Why was it that from that moment the young teacher determined that if in human power to compass it, Johnnie should prove an honor instead of a disgrace to her school? It was partly from ambition—from a wish to prove herself equal to the severest task of a teacher; but it was fully as much from a yearning sympathy for the little offcast, a disposition akin to that of the angels when they rejoice over "one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance."

Hope never forgot the events of that Monday morning. The school house was about three-quarters of a mile from Mr. Watkins, and her walk thither was delightful. The roads were dry and hard, the weather pleasant, the view along her path, if not picturesque, was at least rural and pretty, and she herself was in good spirits. James and Willie were chatting gaily together, with little Johnnie Irving, the little boy of whom Mr. Watkins had told her, and the three gathered bunches of wild flowers and brought them to her. The walk seemed so short that she was surprised when she heard the children exclaim in unison, "Yonder's the school house!" She glanced toward the spot they designated, and there, half-concealed by the large trees in front of it, was the scene of her future trials for the next few months. A tolerably large frame house, with a brick chimney, heavy wooden shutters to the glass windows, and a narrow piazza in front—a house whose appearance a coat of paint would certainly have improved very much—such was Hope's school house. There was nothing in its outward aspect to absolutely repel one, but

there was equally as little to attract. The interior corresponded most charmingly with its outward looks. Walls which had once been white, smoked almost to blackness by a too free use of lightwood in the wide, yawning fire-place, and ornamented by the hieroglyphics of incipient pensmen, heavy, clumsy desks, so awkwardly constructed as more to resemble a contrivance for punishment than a comfortable seat for the "human form divine," a scratched and shabby-looking blackboard, and a platform constructed for the use of embryo orators, "the future Wirts and Henrys of the commonwealth;" such was the interior of this place for instruction. Whatever a child might learn here would certainly be from hard study, not from the attractiveness of his surroundings. Only the bare necessities of a scholar's life and hardly that; no brightness nor beauty to allure the little feet up the steep hill of knowledge. Yet as much as it lacked of what a school-room *ought* to be, of what it might be, with a very little extra expense, this building was very far superior to the average school-house in the country. "You will not lack for light, Miss Caldwell," remarked one of her patrons, pointing to the narrow windows, with their diminutive panes of glass, nor for fire either."

He did not add that the chimney smoked so as at times to have both teachers and scholars in tears.

"Children is so pampered up now-a-days," said old Mr. Fogymen to her; "why, when *I* went ter school there was jest one long table for all to write at, and not a bench with a back to it in the school-house. I sometimes tells my children I don't know what they's comin' to."

A majority of Hope's patrons were, however, liberal-thinking, as well as kind-hearted people, who, if they might err in small matters, were too generous and hospitable for one to find much fault with them. Mr. Watkins, in particular, seemed disposed to do all in his power for her, and strove to render her lot as easy and pleasant as

possible. She suggested a few additions to the school furniture, which he promised to see to for her. There were some thirty scholars in and around the house, besides some of the patrons of the school. Among the latter was a middle-aged woman, whose sallow skin, coarse gray hair, ugly features and awkward figure would have rendered her an extremely unattractive person, even in the most elegant attire, but when her natural homeliness was still farther set off by a blue homespun dress, with plain and not over-wide skirt, a broad old-fashioned linen collar, worked in large scallops and fastened by a huge antiquated breast-pin, a long brown calico apron, hair arranged in a knot about as big as a fifty cent piece, and immense circular ear-rings in her ears, she reminded Hope very much of a comic valentine. Before the latter had more than hung up her hat and taken her seat, this lady came down one of the aisles with her boys on either side of her. These boys were white-haired, with complexion resembling the color of dirty tallow, and pale, dull-looking blue eyes, looking straight at Hope. They were dressed in a style resembling that of their mother, as near as the difference of sex permitted. Blue checked shirts and a suit of brown homespun, with stout shoes and socks knit at home ; such was their attire, yet they looked quite neat. Their mother stopped before Hope, and with a courtesy which would have done honor to some lady of a century back said :

"This is Miss Caldwell, I suppose ?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Hope, scarcely knowing whether to be amused, vexed or afraid, "that is my name."

"And mine," the lady returned, "is Simmons—the widder Simmons. I work hard for a livin', I does, and these here are my two sons. My husband was a kind of politicianer, and so, sez he, when my oldest son was named, he shall be called George Washington. That's him," designating the tallest boy, "and the youngest is named

Thomas Jefferson. Who knows, sez he, but that they both may be Presidents some day, for this country is free, sez he, and the poor man's child can rise as well as the rich man's. Well, I've tried to do my best since he died, but I can't manage to send them to school but four or five months in the year generally, and we don't get much of the free money here. But I expect to send them this whole session, and what I come to tell you is this: My two boys is very different in their turns. George Washington is very different in his disposition from Thomas Jefferson. You see I'm their mother, and I understand them. But you can't drive 'na one of them. They both must be coaxed, they must be dealt kindly with, and I wants you to treat them jest as good as if they was the richest boys in the land. But George—*he* has a turn for 'rethmetic and he's kinder mischievous, which I don't want you to pay no 'tention to, 'cause it's his disposition, and he don't mean no harm by it, but Tommie is as good a boy as the sun ever shined or, only he don't love books much, which I thinks sensible, sence he hain't been to school much. But I'll try them both awhile, and ef they don't get along I'll take them away; so I'll jest let you know aforehand. Their books is jest such as I had. George's spelling-book was mine when I went ter school, and I hope you won't let the children tear it on *that* account; and Tommie's used to be my dear old man's, which I prize jest as much. And when any of the other children mistreats mine I jest hope you will thrash them well."

It was well for Hope that this scene presented itself to her in so ludicrous a light — touched her sense of the ridiculous so keenly as to overpower the very natural indignation which she felt at being dictated to by such a person, and that, too, at the very beginning of her school. But viewing it in this light it was with great difficulty she could prevent herself from giving vent to her feelings by laughing

outright—the more particularly that she chanced to catch Mr. Watkins' eye about this time and noticed its mischievous twinkle. Then, too, her feelings of *sympathy* were aroused in behalf of a poor, lone, hard-working widow, who, in her ignorance and excess of maternal love, had come to let it be known that she meant to have justice done her children. Thinking over the matter thus, Hope lost all thought of anger, and replied to Mrs. Simmons in quite a dignified manner, assuring her that she would certainly do right by the children, and that if there was any fault to find it would be decidedly the best to take them home. The old lady was so awed by Hope's manner that she said not another word to her, except to "wish her well" upon her departure. The rest of the patrons who were present, after being introduced to Hope by Mr. Watkins, spoke a few encouraging words to her in regard to the new life she was about to begin, assured her of their interest in the well-being of her school, and their readiness to assist her in any way possible. Hope thanked them for their good wishes, and to their offers of assistance suggested that a "load or two of wood be hauled to the school-house and a plentiful supply of chalk or crayons be provided for the children's exercises on the blackboard." These requests they promised should be complied with, and took their departure, leaving the pupils wondering why their teacher should want wood put in place so early in the season. Hope's scholars ranged from seven to eighteen years, and were about as varied a collection as one generally sees at a country school. They were as diverse from each other, and raised under as different influences as though Christendom and Paganism had set the bounds between them. Here were two little children who were interesting in appearance and gifted with more than ordinary intelligence, whose father was a gambler and the keeper of a common bar-room, while their mother was intelligent and more than

ordinarily refined. The two oldest girls in school were sisters, one eighteen, the other sixteen years old. They were well formed, good looking girls, but bore unmistakable marks of having been roughly raised. Their names were Helen and Mary Hartwell. Both were deplorably ignorant, they being barely able to read and write a little, and not even knowing the multiplication table perfectly. There were three other sisters, who seemed so kind-hearted and affectionate, and withal so pleased with their new teacher, that Hope felt an affection spring up in her heart for them. Then there was a little girl and boy who interested her—the boy from his active ways and intelligent look—the girl from her dark, gipsyish beauty and modest appearance. They bore the names of Leola Wilkins and Roy Wilkins. A blue-eyed, light-haired, intelligent girl named Ida Hunter, a boy of seventeen, with an honest, pleasant face, who walked on crutches, called David Wheeler, a handsome, hazel-eyed little fellow by the name of Harry Ambler, two awkward, red-haired, freckled-faced boys, who rejoiced under the musical cognomens of Sam and Joe Siggins, and a sweet-faced, brown-eyed girl called Katie Powers. Such were a few of the most conspicuous of Hope's scholars, the list terminating with three who were more noticeable for the extreme length of their respective names than for any distinguishing characteristic they possessed. They were called respectively Euphemia Ann, Octavia Jane and Adolphus Henry Tyler. When told their names Hope wondered to herself why people would impose such burdensome names on poor, helpless children. Of course she had to call her pupils to order before blessed with a knowledge of their names. She then wrote down the name of each in her school register, and asked each one some general questions, with a view of ascertaining the advancement of the individual members of her school before endeavoring to classify them. But in trying to

arrange them in classes she was completely foiled. There were not a dozen text books alike in the school. In spelling, Webster's speller—"the blue-backed spelling book," as the children called it, took the lead, yet there were other spellers used by the pupils. The readers, it seemed to her, were by every author who had written since the Revolution; geography by Smith, Mitchell, Cornell, Monteith and others; grammar by as many different authors, ditto arithmetic, histories and definers; copy-books were of various kinds; some consisted of a few sheets of paper, purchased at the nearest store and carelessly sewed together. These were intended for copies to be "set" by the teacher. Some were similarly made, but had copies already "set" by previous teachers or by some friend who prided him or herself on writing a pretty hand, while some, as their owners proudly announced, upon handing them to her, "were new boughten ones, with copy plate." Hope was at her wits end. She had not expected to do much beside organize her school the first day, but how was she to do this under existing circumstances? She could not classify her scholars properly, and to hear them all separately would not only be a great deal of useless trouble, but would also occasion a great loss of time. So she wrote down the names of the books she wanted on little strips of paper, giving each scholar who needed books his respective slip to hand to his parents at night, with the further injunction to tell his father or mother, as the case might be, "that she wanted the books just as soon as possible." Then she assigned each scholar his or her respective desks, gave each of the girls certain weeks to sweep the school-room, appointing assistants, in case of absence or sickness, to take their place. For the boys she arranged the weeks for their bringing up water from the spring and bringing in wood in a similar manner. She also laid down certain general rules for the pupils to be governed by. These were

few in number, and she determined that they should be fully carried out.

"There is one thing that I shall require of you all," she said, "and that is punctuality. When the bell is rung for you to come in school I wish you to come at once. Let there be no tarrying on the way. I shall endeavor to be promptly here at my school hour, and shall expect you to do likewise."

When Hope had completed all her arrangements she found by consulting her watch, which, luckily for her now, not even bitter poverty had induced her to sell, that it was twelve o'clock, the time for her noontide rest of one hour. During this recess she amused herself by watching the children at their sports, and strove, as far as possible, to learn something of the disposition of each while they were comparatively free from the restraints of the school-room. How easy a matter it is at such times to detect the germs of character, which will, if let alone, be fully developed in manhood or womanhood! But while their teacher was studying the children, they were studying her, and the remarks they made to each other when out of her hearing concerning her would have provoked a smile on her countenance had she heard them.

"She's too fine ladyfied to suit me," said Helen Hartwell. I noticed her how she opened her eyes when I spelled scissors wrong this morning, jest as if I had done nothing but spell all my life. I wish I could see her hoe out a row of corn, I do. I guess she'd find out how I can do some things better than she."

"Hush!" said her sister, who was milder-looking and also more prudent than Helen, "you must not talk so. I think Miss Caldwell is very nice looking."

"Nice looking! I guess so, when she has nothing to do but put on her clothes in the morning and wear kid gloves to keep her hands white. I reckon I would be nice looking

too if I had a plenty of clothes and no more to do than that."

To a third person this might not have seemed so evident a truth, as it did to Miss Helen herself, for she was strikingly careless in those little niceties of the toilet which betoken the truly refined lady. A clean pocket-handkerchief could never have come in close contact with her neck for any length of time without being lamentably damaged in its appearance, and her hair looked as though it had not been combed in a month. Some of Hope's scholars, however, had a very different opinion of her to that of Helen—were indeed quite charmed with her, and child-like they did not hesitate to express themselves very freely about her when to themselves. The hour seemed all too short for their chat, and when the bell rang for them to come back in school (there had been another bell rung five minutes before for them to wash their hands preparatory to entering the school room), some of the children paid not the slightest attention to it, but lagged behind as long as possible, evidently expecting another summons ere they made their appearance. But no such summons came. Hope went on very quietly with her duties, not even speaking a word to the offenders when, full ten minutes *behind* time, they sneaked in and took their seats. She *took notice* of them, however, and when four o'clock came she looked at her watch and said :

"All of you children who came in here at the proper time to-day, and I know exactly which of you did so, may now leave the school room, taking care to file out two by two and very quietly. But there are six of you who did not answer to my summons until fully ten minutes after it was given. Those six children will remain in here with me until they have made up the time they have lost. Ten minutes apiece for six children is exactly sixty minutes

that have been lost ; we will stay here that long and spend the time in some useful manner."

A thrill of astonishment ran through the school at these calmly, yet firmly spoken words. The scholars had before made up their minds that Hope would prove a good, indulgent teacher, crossing them in nothing—but they now saw their mistake. One look at her pale, determined face was enough to convince the hardiest one of them that she was not a girl to be trifled with. Helen Hartwell, who had wilfully and premeditatedly violated her teacher's rule, was on fire with indignation. Her face turned crimson and her eyes fairly blazed. For one moment she was tempted to give vent to her feelings by a torrent of rebellious words, but an indefinable awe held her in check. Had Hope been one whit less dignified, or even seemed excited in the least, the floodgates of Helen's wrath would have been opened, but there was something in the manner of her teacher so different to what she had been accustomed as to completely cower her. Angry as she was, she durst not speak. Nor was Helen the only rebellious spirit there. There were five others who were highly indignant at the thought of being kept in an hour just for losing a few minutes, yet not one of the number dared to express his or her thoughts in words.

For one hour the young teacher instructed them, partly by reading aloud herself, partly by compelling them to read, in the *Life of Benjamin Franklin*, who, she explained to them in the progress of their reading, owed all of his greatness to habits of industry, promptness and sobriety. Before the lesson was over, nearly all of them had become a little interested in the history of one of America's greatest sons, and had half-forgotten the angry feelings which had possessed them when they were first required to remain in. But none of them forgot the lesson Hope had endeavored to impress on their minds, and during that session she had no farther trouble with them in regard to punctuality.

The reader may well believe that she did not enforce this rule without self-sacrifice. It cost her an effort to compel others to obedience, partly from being young and inexperienced herself, but more because she had no natural love of governing. With some it is a pleasure to rule; with others it is not. But duty and her ambition to become a good teacher prompted her to exact *implicit obedience* to all of her rules.

Mr. Watkins' two children, who had to wait for Hope during her extra hour in the school room, informed their parents of the cause of their delay. Mr. Watkins laughed heartily at their recital of it.

"Never mind your lack of experience, Miss Hope; if you can enforce your rules thus quietly with such children as Helen Hartwell and Sam and Joe Liggins, there is no fear of failure on your part. You have taken a different course from any teacher we have had yet. Some have scolded, some have beaten, some have contented themselves with giving demerit marks to the scholars for disobedience to rules; but while I approve of all these punishments, scolding excepted, I really believe you have chosen the wiser course. Some children do not mind whipping, some laugh at demerit marks, but there are few indeed who do not hate to be confined in the house after school hours. Let them see, too, that every sin carries its own punishment with it, and the lesson will not be lost on them. Above all though, it weakens the authority of a teacher to be capricious in governing, allowing a rule to be violated with impunity to-day and punishing its violation to-morrow. Let a child once see that it is for his own good, and not to gratify angry feelings that you punish him, and he will be the better prepared to obey you cheerfully."

Hope hearkened to all this good advice, but her patience was put sorely to the test on the morrow. The parents of some few of the children not only refused to buy the books

she had ordered, but the scholars told her little things which were said at their homes concerning the books which were positively exasperating.

"Mama says," said Helen Hartwell, "that if we ever write as good a hand as the teacher who sot these copies that she'll be perfectly satisfied."

"Pa says," said Sam Liggins, "that these books is good enough for us, and that we'll be smart men if we ever learn all that's in them."

"Aunt Rachel says," said Euphemia Tyler, "that she ain't in favor of new-fangled ways of teaching, and she believes that the people in old times was better than they is now, any way."

What could Hope say or do? A torrent of indignant blood rushed to her cheeks, words of withering sarcasm to her lips; but she choked back the words and strove desperately for calmness. It was sometime ere she could feel at all composed, but she spoke not a syllable until she was so, to the utter astonishment of the children, who had diverted themselves with the idea of seeing her angry. She taught on as best she could that day, listening to the sing-song reading of the children which she could not at once correct; hearing spelling lessons "in the book and by heart;" asking questions in arithmetic and overlooking sums wrought out on the slate; hearing recitations in some three or four different grammars and as many geographies, and filling up six hours with continual labor without any adequate result of her toil. For Hope was not one to content herself with merely working for wages; she was anxious that her scholars should reap the benefit of that labor. That night she informed Mr. Watkins of her morning's experience and also unfolded her plans for the future to him.

"Sooner than be perplexed and troubled as I am by such an endless round of recitations to no good purpose, I will

procure the books myself for all who will not get them, and if they pay me well and good ; if not, I will only lose money, not heart and temper."

Thus she spoke, and Mr. Watkins informed her that he had all the books she required at his store and would sell them to her at cost if she wished it.

"Still, Miss Hope," said he, I cannot say I approve of your plan. People should pay for books for their own children. That which costs them nothing they do not appreciate, and will not thank you for."

"I know that very well," she replied. I am not working for thanks either, but simply to please myself in this matter."

"Very well, you shall have the books on the terms I promised, and at the end of the session you can settle with me."

So the books were gotten, the children arranged into such classes as Hope deemed best, and she began to feel that her school was at last fairly started. The first week passed away quickly enough, though it was a new era in her life. It was with a sigh of relief that she dismissed the children on Friday evening. Never had she looked forward to a day of leisure as she now did to the morrow. She sympathized with the children, who expressed their joy at the prospect of a day's holiday by shouts, which were audible to their teacher when she was half way home.

The evening, which was superlatively beautiful, seemed like a foretaste of Elysium, and, released from the trials and vexations of the school-room, Hope's spirits went up like a balloon. Her week of toil had given an exquisite charm to this respite from daily labor.

"Perhaps, after all," she said to herself, "the pleasure was worth the sacrifice."

When she arrived at Mr. Watkins' she found a letter there awaiting her. It was from her mother, the first that

she had received since she left home. She read it eagerly, rapturously—her cup of joy seemed full, as she read again and again the words of love penned by a mother's hand, dictated by a mother's heart. Never had that mother seemed so dear to her. Mrs. Caldwell wrote "that she was well, that cousin Mary was with her, and was not only a very pleasant companion, but also a great help to her. Still she missed her daughter, though she was glad that she had independence enough to wish to earn something for herself. She felt convinced that it was all for the best; if it had no other good effect, it would be apt to make home dearer to her upon her return." There was also a box for Hope, containing some unfinished drawings, which she wished to work on during her leisure moments. At the sight of them all the ambitious dreams which for one short week had been almost banished from her mind, "came thronging back again" with even more than wonted power, and she longed for the coming of Saturday, that she might have one day to work at her favorite employment. But scarcely had she begun her task the next morning when Willie knocked at her door, and on being admitted informed her that "Mr. Daniel Young was in the parlor and wished to see her." It was with intense regret that Hope was forced to relinquish her loved employ, even to entertain as handsome a fellow as Daniel Young, but she strove to conquer this feeling, and succeeded so well, in at least not letting it betray her into discourtesy or absent-mindedness, that Mr. Young never dreamed of her experiencing aught save pleasure at his coming. She greeted him pleasantly, and crocheting in hand, took a seat opposite to him. As she sat there, with fingers busy with her work, conversing quietly, and lending a listening ear to all that her companion said, he would never have thought of her cherishing any ambition save that of a pleasant settlement in life. Her manner on this occasion especially

pleased him. He was no great lover of talkative women, and admired her way of conversing, speaking just the right thing at the right time, leaving no gaps in the conversation, yet equally as ready to listen to others as to talk herself. It was this last trait which particularly pleased him. Their chat this morning was quite interesting. He was a finished scholar, a great reader, a thorough man of the world, and Hope did not hesitate to ask him any question she wished concerning any subject of which she was ignorant. By thus appearing to acknowledge him as her superior in some respects, the young girl touched the master chord of his nature—vanity—and he became more interested in her than was his wont with the majority of girls. He said to himself that “Hope Caldwell was decidedly the most interesting girl he had met with for a long while, as well as one of the prettiest.” He exerted himself to be entertaining to her, and in spite of her first regretful feelings at being taken from her cherished work, Hope found herself really and thoroughly interested in his chat. After the lapse of an hour he said :

“Miss Caldwell, time has flown so rapidly since I came here that I have almost forgotten the object of my visit, but I came to see if you would accompany me to Mrs. Stuart’s. Your young friends are very anxious to have you come.”

It required a very vivid recollection of her original intention of finishing her drawing to-day for Hope to refuse this invitation. She pictured to herself all the pleasure she would see with her young friends, and it did seem unreasonable to deny herself of every enjoyment for that which after all might not profit her. Then came the recollection of other duties which would be neglected by her absence, the neglect of which would make her feel uncomfortable all through the coming week. Thinking over the matter in this light, she came to her decision.

"I cannot go to-day, Mr. Young," she said, "I have some work to do that must be attended to ere I visit anywhere. I thank you for your kind invitation, but must decline it for this time. If you choose to come some Saturday when I am more at leisure, I will go."

"Why not defer your work until next Saturday? I am very anxious for you to go to-day and the young ladies will be disappointed."

"Don't persuade me," she said, beseechingly; "were I to leave, knowing that I had left undone things which I ought to do, I would not enjoy my visit. A divided mind always renders me unhappy."

"I suppose, then, that you cannot carry your work with you?" glancing significantly at the tidy she was crocheting.

"No," was her reply, "that would be impossible."

"Then, Miss Caldwell, I must take my departure. I am very sorry that I cannot induce you to accompany me to-day, but since such is the case, I will come for you some other time if you will promise to go. Suppose I come next Saturday; will you go then?"

Hope hesitated a moment, then replied that she would, provided that no unexpected task detained her at home.

"You know how I am situated, Mr. Young. All of the little work I have to do for myself, besides my writing, etc., must be done either on Saturday or at night. So when I leave on Saturday I must make all of my arrangements beforehand, that I may visit with a clear conscience."

"To be sure, Miss Caldwell, you do not mean to make pleasure entirely subservient to duty, do you? You know the proverb of what 'all work and no play' will do."

"Yes, indeed," she answered, "and I know also the proverb of what 'all *play* and no work' will effect, and I must confess that I am very much inclined to think—I speak of course of those who are perfectly free to act as they like—that the rust of indolence renders more persons dull than the wear of toil."

Mr. Young looked a little mortified. "I believe, Miss Caldwell, you have ascertained my weakness—my besetting sin—and feel called upon to reprove it."

"I!" she exclaimed, in unfeigned surprise. "You astonish me."

"Yes," said he, "don't you remember last Sunday—it was the honey bees and the drones, and to-day here it is again."

"No," she replied, "you should know better than to think of *my* reproofing your sins, when I am scarcely acquainted with you—certainly not well enough to know your disposition. Believe me, if aught savoring of sarcasm fell from my lips last Sunday, it was *unintentional*. There is nothing I dislike more than a sarcastic turn, and if ever I feel called upon to reprove my friends, I shall do so *plainly*, but *privately*, and in friendship, not in scorn."

Mr. Young looked at her in utter surprise. He had formed an opinion of her last Sunday not very favorable to her sweetness of disposition, though quite flattering to her in regard to her looks and intelligence, and now he found himself utterly mistaken in his judgment of her. Instead of the quick, sarcastic being he had imagined her, who would render back witticism for witticism, and retort for retort, she proved to be, if a less brilliant, a far more amiable person. He saw her *then* as one to be admired; he viewed her *now* as one to be loved and sought after. We mean in a general sense, for he had no thought of loving any one, and considered himself proof against female charms. But something in Hope's manner interested him. Her reserve and quietness, her firmness in refusing to leave duty for pleasure, while it vexed him a little, challenged his admiration for her. He left soon after her refusal to go with him to Mr. Stuart's, and notwithstanding her solicitations for him to stay longer.

It must be confessed that it was sometime ere Hope

could fix her mind upon her work when she again resumed it. She felt half angry with herself for being different from other girls. "Why can I not enjoy myself like others, without one thought or care for the future? Sometimes I wish I was like some other girls, with no turn except for domestic life, or with no thought except of beaux, and dress, and pleasure. And yet, after all, I wonder if *their* enjoyment is *greater* than *mine*." She stopped meditating after this and worked on steadily till dinner, and after dinner until four o'clock. Her work was nearly completed when she was interrupted again.

"Mrs. Moran and her daughter are in the parlor and wish to see you, Miss Caldwell," said Mrs. Watkins, as Hope went to the door in answer to her knock and invited her in. The lady's eye fell upon the painting, which Hope had no chance to conceal, and her face lighted up with undisguised admiration as she surveyed it.

"Is this really your work, Miss Caldwell?" she inquired; "you have talent if it is, and I do not blame you for wishing to devote every spare moment to your art."

Hope besought her not to speak of it, which she promised to do, though "for her part she said she would feel too proud of such paintings to wish to keep them hid."

"No," said Hope, "I wish to attain perfection, at least in my own eyes, before my pictures ever meet the public gaze. I mean to work under a master when my school is out, and then teach again, until I can attend Cooper's Art Institute, and after awhile perhaps I may attain both fame and fortune."

"You are an ambitious girl," replied Mrs. Watkins, kissing her, "and I, for one, glory in your spirit."

"Fame is all I ask for," said Hope with a half sigh, which revealed to Mrs. Watkins something of the girl's inner life. With a woman's ready tact, she divined the truth that our heroine had been disappointed in love—had been foiled in her best affections.

Mrs. Moran and her daughter Estelle were extremely pleasant. The daughter was tall, graceful, stylish-looking, with an exquisitely fair skin, and a very lively manner of talking. The mother had a low, sweet voice, a pleasant face, and was ever saying agreeable things, and was, withal, quite intelligent and interesting.

Something was spoken of Mr. Young. "Isn't he handsome?" inquired Estelle.

"Yes, very," replied Hope. "I think him quite pleasant, too, as well as the young ladies and gentlemen who were with him last Sunday."

"Oh, yes," said Estelle, "you are speaking of Mary and Hattie Stuart and of Mr. Nathan Alison. He likes you ever so much."

"Does he?" said Hope absently, then recalling her thoughts in a second, she continued: "I am well pleased with this neighborhood so far, and like all the people whose acquaintance I have formed."

"And how do you like teaching," inquired Mrs. Moran. "I hear this is your first school."

"I can scarcely tell," replied Hope, "but I try to like it, as I am engaged in it."

"I admire that disposition very much," said Mrs. Moran, "for some things we are compelled to do, and if we only try to like them, after awhile, what was once a drudgery, becomes an agreeable task."

She was merely stating a general truth, with a view to encourage Hope, but circumstanced as the latter was, she felt a little sensitive in regard to being compelled to teach. Mrs. Watkins remarked the slight shadow on her brow and hastened to dispel it by saying, "that whether Miss Caldwell fancied teaching or not, she should not be allowed to quit the profession, she seemed so eminently fitted for it."

Hope nervously tried to change the subject to something less personal. Unlike the most of people, she wished

rather to avoid any allusion to her profession than refer to it. The reader may judge from this little incident of how exquisitely susceptible to suffering Hope Caldwell was, and of what an ordeal it was to one of her sensitive turn to fill the place of a country teacher. For the remainder of the evening the time flew by on fairy wings. Estelle was planning off one pleasure after another for Hope and herself, while her mother, in a more quiet manner than the daughter, assured Hope "that if she would but visit her she would do all in her power to make her stay agreeable. You must be sociable, Miss Caldwell, and I think you will like this place. Our young people are very lively, and nothing delights the heads of the families around more than to promote the pleasure of their children and of their young companions. True, they are poorer, and have it less in their power to live at ease than in the olden days, yet who cares for that, so long as hospitality reigns supreme?"

Hope replied "that nothing would afford her more pleasure than to visit her new acquaintances at her earliest leisure. But you must remember," said she, "that I have no day but Saturday to be sociable, and even then I have a good deal of work to do."

Once or twice was Mr. Young's name called in the course of their conversation, and Hope judged that he was a favorite with the young ladies, and probably spoiled by them. She became in consequence just a little prejudiced against him. She was glad that she had not accepted his invitation of the morning, even apart from the neglect of her beloved painting. "No," she thought, "she would assure him by her actions that she did not value his attention." She little dreamed that already she had, if he was vain, ministered to his vanity by asking information of him. Then she had praised him to Estelle, and should the latter chance to let him know of it, Hope, too, would be enrolled on the list of those who considered him superior

to the generality of men. When Mrs. Moran rose to depart she kissed our heroine, as did Estelle, insisting on her visiting them at the very earliest time possible. "If you can spare no other time I will send for you some evening and you can spend the night with me and I will have you in school betime in the morning," she said. When they left the sun was very nearly down.

Hope went in and arranged her apartment in perfect order, then went out in the flower garden to gather bouquets for her vases on the mantel-piece. That night, just before supper, she chanced to glance at the mirror in her room and was amazed at the improvement in her looks. Absolutely there was color in her cheeks—a delicate flush, which beautified her face inexpressibly; her eyes were brighter than usual, her lips scarlet, and the white chrysanthums which she had carelessly arranged in her hair gave an added charm to the already lovely face. Hers was a plain, brown dress, with a frill of lace around the neck and in the sleeves, and unrelieved by ornament, save a bow of pink ribbon at the throat; yet, fitting her, as it did, to perfection, nothing seemed lacking in her attire. No glitter of jewels nor shimmer of silk or satin would have added one iota to the simple, yet graceful dress, which seemed but a part of the graceful creature it adorned. Robert King looked at her with undisguised admiration. "This place suits you, Miss Hope," he said, in his frank, boyish way; "you have grown ten degrees prettier since you came here. Perhaps it would be best for you to stay here always."

"Maybe, after awhile, I might take an opposite turn," said she, not offended by, but a little embarrassed at, his bluntness, which, however, she excused on the score of youth. Then the conversation at the table became general, and joke and laugh went round.

They all sat out on the moonlit piazza after supper, where

they sang and talked until bed-time. Mrs. Watkins possessed one of those sweet, plaintive voices, whose melody sinks deep in the heart. Her voice seemed but the index of the gentle, amiable disposition of the lady to whom it belonged. Simple ballads or hymns, breathing of pure affection, or of rapt devotion, sounded best as sung by her. And so another Saturday evening found Hope in her new home, better satisfied, stronger, more self-reliant and happier than she had been for many years. The novelty of her life, its busy activity, the pleasure of forming new acquaintances, and her hopeful looking forward to the future, all conspired to render her life more enjoyable than heretofore, notwithstanding its cares. Altogether, she had no cause, so far, to regret her venture. She wrote a letter to her mother that night, after the remainder of the household had retired, giving a full description of her life and of the acquaintances she had formed, of the kindness she had met with and of her hopes for the future, ending with these words: "I hope and trust, dear mother, that this may be the beginning of a new life with both of us, that all of the gloomy past may be forgotten by us, and that we may be both useful and happy in the long years which are to come."

CHAPTER VI.

There was a regular Sunday-school kept up at the little white church near Mr. Watkins', but Hope had not as yet attended it. On the Sabbath morning after the events we have just described, she arose in time to put her room to rights, to take a walk among the flowers and to have a merry chat with Robert King and the children ere the bell

rang for breakfast. After breakfast there was a general gathering up of Sunday-school books and donning of hats and bonnets, preparatory to attending church ; for they expected to remain until after the sermon was over, as there was preaching there that Sunday. Mrs. Watkins, who was conscientiously opposed to keeping a servant in the kitchen cooking while she was listening to the Word of God at church, had all of her dinner prepared beforehand, so that there was nothing to do during the day and no one left at home.

Maud looked as sweet as a rosebud in her white dress, looped with blue ribbon, and her little straw hat trimmed in blue. Hope was unmistakably attractive, notwithstanding her paleness, and Mrs. Watkins was a very pretty little lady, and many a stealthy, admiring glance was cast on the trio as they walked up the aisle. During the Sunday-school exercises Hope strove to keep her mind on the scene before her, but in spite of herself her thoughts would rove. Mary and Hattie Stuart were there, dressed beautifully, together with Nathan Alison, Mrs. Moran, Estelle, and last, but not least, Mr. Young. Her scholars, too, were nearly all present. She could not realize that she had taught them but for one short week, so familiar had each face grown, though all of them looked much improved by their Sunday apparel. One face she missed from the crowd ; it was that of Johnnie Twining. She felt interested in his welfare and regretted that he was not present, and she determined to inquire into the matter and to use every effort to induce him to attend the Sabbath-school. Mr. Watkins came around to her seat and inquired if she would not like to take a class, saying that one of the teachers was absent, and they would be glad if she would fill the place. Hope's first impulse was to utterly refuse to take any part in the school, for did she not teach five days in the week, and were there not laborers enough in the vineyard to

spare her? Then the stern voice of conscience, a voice which she could never wholly disregard, bade her "do what her hands found to do and do it with all her might;" and hearkening to this voice, she replied quietly—so quietly that Mr. Watkins little dreamed of what a sacrifice it was to her: "Yes, sir, I will take a class as an assistant teacher, and if I am needed very much I will teach any way."

He showed her her class, saying, "Miss Hope, when you are absent Mrs. Watkins will take charge of your class. It would not be right for you to feel in duty bound to be here when you already have so little time for rest and recreation."

The singing pleased her very much. The simple Sunday-school songs sung by so many childish voices sounded inexpressibly sweet and charming, and our heroine felt an interest that she had never felt before in children. Her one short week of teaching had invested childhood with a new charm to her—had caused her to feel a yearning desire for the improvement of the young.

The sermon that day was not superior to many she had listened to, save in the extreme earnestness with which it was delivered. The preacher seemed absorbed in his theme—forgetful of himself, studying only the interest of his hearers and their eternal salvation. He seemed very young, his beardless face strangely inconsistent with the deep seriousness of his countenance. Hope listened to him with pleasure, and almost unconsciously was edified by his sermon.

After preaching was over there was the usual amount of friendly greeting and neighborly gossip which one hears at a country church. Hope's new friends crowded around her in a most cordial manner and expressed their pleasure in seeing her. Mary and Hattie Stuart reproached her for not visiting them the day before.

"We had such a nice time last night," said Mary. "Hattie played on the piano, while Mr. Young accompanied her with the violin, and we absolutely persuaded Mr. Rodney Gilbert to take a part in the concert by blowing the flute, and really we had a pleasant concert."

"Mr. Rodney Gilbert," repeated Hope mechanically, "I never heard of him."

"No, I suppose not, and we who know him seldom ever see him, he is so selfish; but he is very wealthy, and is considered quite a catch."

These words haunted our heroine. Did all the world judge by this standard, wealth and a fortunate combination of circumstances? It seemed so, indeed, when under the shadow of the church walls, and scarcely out of hearing of the Gospel, one should be held up as a "good catch" because he was wealthy.

"I tell you what," continued Mary in her gay, off-hand way, little guessing at the thoughts which were passing through Hope's mind, "you will have to do your best to appear to advantage when Mr. Gilbert sees you, for Mr. Young has described you to him as being but little less than an angel in your appearance and disposition."

"I trust," said Hope, a flush of mortification reddening her cheeks, "that if Mr. Gilbert has formed a higher opinion of me than I deserve, that I will never be so unlucky as to meet him, as I shall feel under restraint while in his company."

"Never mind," responded Mary laughingly, seeming to take no notice of her companion's vexation, "you will be sure to see him just because you do not want to," and away she went to another crowd of girls, chatting as gaily with them as though in a ball-room. Mr. Watkins came around to the spot where Hope was standing. He was accompanied by the preacher, whom he introduced to her as Mr. Ransom. Mr. Ransom, though very youthful-looking,

was remarkably handsome. He had, too, such a quiet, pleasant way about him, and was withal so destitute of vanity, that Hope liked him at once. He accompanied the family home that day, and in the afternoon, as they sat out on the piazza conversing, she enjoyed his company very much. She found out that as well calculated as he was to arouse his hearers to a sense of their spiritual need while exhorting them in the pulpit, he was no less powerful to win them to religion by the charm of pleasant and edifying conversation when in the family circle. "Love through all his actions ran," and the gossip and evil speaker were rebuked by his words. Never bitter nor fault-finding, the mantle of his charity was large enough to "hide a multitude of sin." "If I have aught against my neighbor, I shall tell him and *him alone*," he was wont to say. "Nothing is gained by speaking of another's fault to others." The consequence of this conduct was to win many to Christ and to gain for himself legions of friends, even among hardened sinners. "Mr. Ransom is a good man," they would say. "He pays his debts punctually, is quiet, and is kind to the poor." "I like him very much," was the expression of opinion among even very worldly people.

In the course of conversation that evening Rodney Gilbert's name was mentioned and Robert King remarked that he seemed "very selfish."

"Selfish!" replied Mr. Ransom; "he may *seem* so now, but I who went to college with him never met with a more generous, whole-souled fellow. He was not partial to preachers generally, nor was he fond of attending church, but to me has been uniformly kind. Of late years I hear that he is morose and exclusive, but there is good in him yet, depend upon it. Some day I hope to see him 'a burning and shining light in the church of the living God.'"

"Charity hopeth all things," was the text that involun-

tarily came into Hope's mind as he said this, and then she thought "this Rodney Gilbert must be a very distinguished personage in this vicinity, but pshaw ! it is money alone which makes him so ; that is the lever which moves the world nowadays."

Mr. Ransom's request that they would sing a hymn before his departure recalled her wandering thoughts, and when he had taken leave of the family, Robert King proposed for them all, that is, for Hope, the children and himself to walk down to the mill. "It is such a pretty place, Miss Hope ; there are some lovely flowers there, and a spring of mineral water."

So Hope consented to go. Mr. Twining's home was between Mr. Watkins' and the mill, and as they passed Hope noticed Mr. Ransom's horse tied at the gate. Glancing in the house, she beheld a scene which was never forgotten by her. The whole room seemed in disorder ; Mr. Twining, with blood-shot eyes and unkempt hair, was sitting on a wooden stool, Mrs. Twining in equally as slatternly a plight on another, while Mr. Ransom had Johnnie drawn close to him, and was conversing with him in so earnest a manner as to render even the child oblivious to passers by, and the little party went on their way unheeded.

"Do you know what he is there for ?" inquired Robert, after they had passed.

"No," she replied, not in particular. Is Mr. Twining one of his members ?

"One of his members !" repeated her companion, laughingly ; he's one of the greatest sots in this country, and his wife is not much better, but Mr. Ransom is one of the men who cherishes the hope that the vilest sinner can be reclaimed. What he wants now is to get Johnnie Twining in the Sunday-school. His parents, of course, will get interested in his progress, and will be apt to come too. The next thing you know they will be attending church

regularly, and perhaps in the far future the whole family may become Christians. Mr. Ransom is certainly one who does not neglect the poor; why, sometimes he even lectures the rich for dressing so finely when they attend church, because, he says, it prevents the poor from coming."

"He is right," said Hope, something like a tear glistening in her eye; it would be well if all ministers copied his example."

"I don't know," said Robert, it does seem a condescension in a man of Mr. Ransom's talent to go to such a house as Mr. Twining's, yet this is but one of the many visits he pays. It must be a great sacrifice to him."

"Yet even the Saviour ate with publicans and sinners," said Hope, "and He has given us an example that we should walk in his steps."

"Are you a member of the church, Miss Hope?" he inquired.

"No sir," she replied, "but if I do not perform my duty, at least I have my idea of what it is."

"So much the worse for you," said he, laughingly, anxious to change the subject. 'Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not.'"

"You have read Pollok, have you?" she asked.

"Yes, and it gave me the blues for a week after. I believe in enjoying life, Miss Hope, and not troubling ourselves about the future."

Hope was silent. She was worldly, yet in her inmost heart she cherished the conviction that a Christian is the only truly happy person upon earth, and sometimes she had thought seriously of becoming one, but the good seed, so far, had been choked with thorns. The walk Robert had chosen was indeed a lovely one. The evening was delightful. It was just cool enough to be pleasant, though the sun had shone with summer fierceness at noon, the trees in yellow and purple and scarlet, varied by every tint

it was possible to conceive of, were gorgeous in the extreme, and the flowers growing along the wayside had all the warmth and richness of color peculiar to autumnal flowers. The mill-dam bore the appearance of a long avenue, over-shadowed by trees of varied kinds and sizes, while the water of the pond stretched away like a mimic lake, reflecting in its depths the azure sky, until, falling over the floodgates in showers of foam, it seemed a miniature cataract. The scene, though neither sublime nor striking, was lovely in the calm hush of the Sabbath evening, and no one could appreciate it more than our heroine. She sat down on a stick of timber left on the mill-dam, and looked away musingly to the sunset sky, now golden with the glow of the departing monarch of day, and for some minutes she was profoundly silent.

"Of what are you thinking?" asked her companion, after watching her for some time admiringly, yet impatiently, for he was anxious to hear her talk.

"I am thinking," said she, without questioning his right to ask such a question, "of how happy life would be were it always as quiet and peaceful as the scene before us."

"Yes," said he, "but it would lack variety ; we would soon tire of its sameness. You remind me of Mr. Rodney Gilbert, Miss Hope ; he is always moralizing in some such way."

"Mr. Gilbert must be a distinguished person around here," remarked Hope, "I have heard him spoken of so often."

"Yes," replied her companion, a little bitterness perceptible in his tone, "he is very well off, you see. He owns the finest plantation and most beautiful house in the county, and has means to come and go as he likes. He has been to Europe several times. All the young ladies around are setting their caps for him."

"I believe I should hate him were I ever to meet with him," she remarked.

"Why," inquired Robert.

"Because I imagine him an intolerably vain, selfish person; one who expects the world to overlook in him faults that would be condemned in a poor man."

"Upon my word," remarked her companion, "I do not know but that you are right, although I must confess that Mr. Gilbert has always been kind to me; has even befriended me once or twice when I was in bitter need."

"Of course," she replied, "he may not be destitute of good qualities, yet few people indeed can withstand the flattery which the world ever gives to the fortunate. I scarcely know which is best for the character, to be extremely rich or extremely poor. Extreme wealth is apt to beget an overbearing disposition, and extreme poverty is liable to make one sour, discontented and envious." Agur's prayer is a good one, even now."

"Well," said Robert, "for my part I would much prefer to take the wealth and run all risks."

"That is quite a natural reflection, yet I say to you that you are *already* rich."

"In what respect?" inquired her companion.

"Rich in your youth, in your health, in having a good mind, and in being a man instead of a poor girl. All occupations are open to you; there is nothing to bar your progress except incapacity or wilful neglect of business; while to a woman but few professions are open, and those few are overcrowded."

Robert laughed. "Miss Hope, you are like no young lady I ever saw. I believe you always have something important on your mind."

"Yes," she responded, "I am naturally of an earnest turn, for you know that life itself is 'real and earnest;' but I trust I am not so earnest as to be boring; if so, let us change the subject," and for the rest of the way con-

versation took such a different turn, and Hope was so lively and entertaining, that Robert found himself marveling at the versatility of her talents and the changeable turn of her disposition, while she was wondering who Rodney Gilbert was like, and half-wishing to see him, notwithstanding what she had said in regard to hating him.

CHAPTER VII.

It did not require two weeks' experience in teaching to convince our heroine that the way of a faithful, conscientious teacher is not one strewn with thornless flowers. We have already attempted a brief description of some of the difficulties which beset her during the week when her school began. The Monday afterward was one of sore trial in the school-room. Two days holiday had rendered the children forgetful of their duty, and there was a long list of imperfect lessons, which were laid aside to be studied and recited during the noon recess. This, of necessity, forced Hope to remain in the school-room with the delinquents, and during this time some of the scholars who were out at play got into a glorious fight. It was Johnnie Twining who, with dilated eyes and voice half-choked with excitement, ran to inform Miss Hope "that Joe and Sam Siggins, George and Tom Simmons were fighting as hard as ever they could."

"Tell them," said Hope, as calmly as she could, "to come here immediately."

Away went Johnnie to the scene of action, but returned at once, informing her that "the boys said they wouldn't come, for they did not believe a word he told them."

Donning her hat as quickly as possible, and mastering her excitement, for it could not be denied that she was excited, Hope proceeded to the field of battle. The four lads were in active contest. Sam had thrown George upon the ground and was pounding him with his fists. The boy's tow hair was disheveled, his face bruised and his nose bleeding, but he showed no sign of surrender. Joe and Tom were struggling desperately, neither seeming to have any advantage of the other, though their torn jackets and generally demoralized appearance bore witness to the ferocity with which they had been fighting, and the distorted countenance of the whole group betokened the demon raging within. Hope surveyed them for one moment before she spoke. Then, with a calmness which was at utter variance with her feelings, she said :

"Boys, will you oblige me so much as to desist from this conduct?"

They stopped immediately, but stood eyeing each other vengefully, ready to renew the battle at the earliest opportunity. But angry as they were, they stood in awe of Hope. There always seemed to them, though they could not explain it, a reserved force behind her quietly spoken commands. "I'm not afraid of that little, weak woman," each one had said when out of her sight, yet Mr. Liggins' stentorian voice or Mrs. Simmons' loudest scolding, backed by the stoutest hickory that either could find, had no such power over them as did their teacher's gently spoken commands. The will to do and to dare was there, and they felt it.

"It was George Simmons who begun it," said Sam Liggins. "He called me a liar, and I won't take that from anybody."

"It wan't, Miss Caldwell, it was Joe and Sam; they called us 'poor bocker' and 'poor white folks,' and we

won't take that, and I did tell him he was a liar for saying so."

"Never mind," said she, and now that the difficulty had arisen, she really felt a kind of gladness that she was equal to the emergency—a moral strength and power which did her positive good ; "never mind, boys, come with me back to the school-room and I will decide your case."

Reluctantly enough they followed her footsteps. They were still sullen and full of bitter, revengeful feelings against each other. For some time she investigated the case, examining the witnesses on either side, one at a time, anxious to arrive at the truth. But this she found it very hard to do. The evidence was so contradictory as to require a much sharper lawyer than Hope to judge of the case, though she could see very plainly that both parties were somewhat to blame. She talked to them for awhile, in the gentlest manner, of the evils of discord, of the sin of quarrelling and fighting, relating one or two incidents to them where fatal effects had followed the giving away to passion.


When in her quiet way of talking she had moved the offenders to real penitence, she concluded by saying : "You boys know it is against the rules of the school to fight, and I am compelled to punish the violation of my rules, however much I may dislike to do so. I do not feel disposed to whip you though, or to expel you from school, but you must remain in at recess for five days and study the life of some good and peaceable man. I will select that of William Penn."

"Miss Hope, if you will just give me a good whipping and let me go, I will thank you," said Sam.

"So will I, so will I," said each of the other boys.

But she would not consent to this. "No, I will do as I have said," she replied.

Every day, for five days, she read to them from the history of the great Quaker, requiring them to answer questions on what she read, and instructing them in regard to the meaning of it. She tried to impress upon their minds the important truth that it is easier to win hearts by kindness than to make others submissive to us after we have once gained their ill will by harsh treatment; told them of how peaceably and happily the Quakers had lived, even when surrounded by savage Indians, because they were good to them, while other colonists who pursued an opposite course had their homes burned down and their own lives and those of their families sacrificed on account of their own folly and wickedness. It was a lesson which was never forgotten by the children. Poor and ignorant they might be, but they had human hearts beating in their bosoms, and Hope had found the key to them. During the remainder of the session there was not another fight in school. Some of the scholars were well trained at home, and had even been to school enough to be pretty well advanced in their studies, but some of them were deplorably ignorant. Johnnie Twining, whom Hope expected to find an unruly child, had so far proved exactly the opposite. He had learned to love his teacher very dearly, and though untrained to a degree that utterly surprised her, was never unruly. But that a child born in a Christian land, and in a stone's throw of the church, should know nothing of God or of his soul—nothing of those great truths which had become so thoroughly a part of her existence that she could not remember when she had learned them—this was a matter of utter astonishment to our heroine. “We need some one to teach the first principles of religion at home as well as in foreign lands,” thought she. That girls fourteen years old knew no more of George Washington than if he were a Chinese, (the historical George Washington we mean, for all knew George Washington Simmons,) had



never heard of Christopher Columbus, were in utter darkness in regard to every matter of history, was a source of very painful surprise to her, yet sometimes it touched her sense of the ludicrous very strongly. The children, it seemed to her, were gifted in saying mirth-provoking things, in making droll remarks which caused her to laugh heartily whenever she thought of them. There was a bright as well as a dark side to her school life. She felt an interest in the progress of the children ; she watched them as narrowly as she had ever done her own work on a favorite sketch. Their dispositions, too, she studied carefully, and strove to find the key to every heart, for of one thing she was thoroughly convinced—that if a teacher fails to secure the good will, if not the affection of a scholar, there is but a small chance for the latter to learn. There must be perfect respect for a teacher, and kind feelings toward one, ere there is a willingness to study under his or her guidance. “After all,” thought Hope, “is not teaching a nobler work than painting, or sculpture? The one, intended merely to gratify the æsthetic feelings of our nature ; the other, to train up in ‘ways of wisdom’ the immortal beings whose everlasting destiny may hinge on the instruction received from their teachers.” She felt the grandeur of her work, but she felt, too, its heavy responsibility. And so struggling on, alternately discouraged by failure or cheered by success in her plans, the second week of her school life passed away. Before the beginning of another week her thoughts were diverted from school and school life by events which we will now relate.

CHAPTER VIII.

True to his appointment with Hope, Mr. Young came on Saturday morning to accompany her to Mr. Stuart's. She had contrived, by working diligently at every moment that she could command, to accomplish all the little tasks which she had allotted to herself to do, and it was with a light heart that she rode off with her escort. The air was cool, there was enough frost to render it exhilarating, and the sun shone brightly over the Autumn landscape. Riding swiftly through the bracing atmosphere, and in such pleasant companionship, it was no marvel that the time fled swiftly away, both to Hope and to her escort, and it was with a feeling of slight regret that they came in sight of their place of destination.

Mr. Stuart's house was a large, white, two-story one, which, from the multitude of its windows and from its long, airy piazzas, gave one the impression that it was an agreeable summer residence, whatever might be its disadvantages in the winter season. It was surrounded by a noble grove of oaks, with a cleared place immediately in front of it for the semi-circular flower yard. This, together with the sight of a great variety of house plants in pots on the sunny piazza, left one in no doubt as to the refined tastes of the inmates of the dwelling. Mary and Hattie were standing on the steps as Mr. Young drove up. They were arrayed in exceedingly becoming costume and looked as fresh and sweet as two rosebuds. They hurried down the steps, and part the way down the paved walk to meet the visitors, kissed Hope affectionately and welcomed her so cordially as to make

her feel at home at once. After showing Mr. Young into the parlor, they invited her upstairs into a large, airy, well-furnished bed-room, where she laid aside her bonnet and shawl and arranged her hair. Then they all descended to the parlor, which was not only elegantly furnished, but was so exquisite in all its appurtenances as to show that refined and cultivated taste had gone hand-in-hand with a free use of means in its adornment. The numerous little embellishments—the work of female fingers, trifling in themselves, yet giving a finishing touch to the whole apartment—were not the least of its attractions. The two girls were busy now, one in crocheting a shawl of crimson zephyr, the other in working a cover for a footstool. Hope felt thankful that she had brought some embroidery with her and was not compelled to sit idle while her companions were at work. Tongues, though, were flying as fast as fingers. The girls compared work, each admiring the article the other was making. There was a play of merry chat and badinage, drifting occasionally into more serious discourse ; but though the young ladies were well educated and intelligent, they were too full of fun to dwell long on any subject which required serious thought.

During the morning Mr. Young and two gentlemen cousins were the only guests, beside Hope, and as they were all quite easy in their manner, and sensible enough not to be boring in conversation, the youthful crowd enjoyed themselves very well. Mr. Stuart, a portly, middle-aged gentleman, came in now and then and was quite agreeable. His wife, “on household cares intent,” entered the room but once before dinner. Mr. Young amused the crowd by reading short pieces from a book of poems, while Edgar Stuart, who was a great mimic, had them almost convulsed with laughter at his clever imitations of a very eccentric person in the neighborhood. His frank, hearty manners, overflowing with mirth and fun, were universally popular.

The twelve o'clock dinner was not only an enjoyable one from the richness, plenty and variety of its well-cooked viands, but derived an additional relish from the easy flow of conversation during the repast—the laughter and play of wit around the social board. Hope felt that the day was passing all too swiftly.

After dinner the gentlemen went out on the piazza to smoke and the girls betook themselves to their room. Mary and Hattie, who had sat up late the preceding night, lay down for a short nap, while their companion amused herself by reading Tennyson. After they awoke and had re-arranged their toilets, all went down again, and while Hattie and Mary played duets on the grand piano, Hope occupied herself in studying the paintings hung against the wall. "Innocence," represented by a lovely babe, grasping at the flame of a candle, its face radiant with delight, was a splendidly planned and well executed picture. "Aurora," with flying steeds and rosy mantle, on which glittered one or two stars, and attended by the Hours, was, too, a fine painting. "Fondly Gazing" pictured a mother bending over the couch of her lovely, slumbering boy, while its companion, "The Empty Cradle," showed the same mother agonizing over the loss of her child, whose empty cradle betokened that he had gone from her sight forever. Hope admired them all very much and again was her ambition to excel in her art awakened with fresh intensity.

Mr. Young and the two Messrs. Stuart invited the girls to take a ride with them on horseback that evening. Hope was but little accustomed to this exercise, but as she had dearly loved it during her father's life time, she made no opposition to the request except to tell them that "she had no riding habit."

"Never mind that," said Hattie Stuart, "I have two and I can lend you one of them, and your black hat with plumes will do plenty well to wear."

So it was arranged that they should go. Mr. Young rode with Hattie, Willie Stuart with his cousin Mary, while Edgar went with Hope. Though feeling a little awkward at first, she soon became accustomed to the exercise, and did so well, that her companion complimented her on her skill in riding.

"I believe you have not been in this part of the country long, Miss Caldwell?" he remarked.

"About three weeks," was her reply.

"I suppose you crossed the Neuse river in coming, but here it is again," said he, as they neared a bridge across that stream. They stood still a moment watching it, but at this point the view was neither picturesque nor interesting, though Mr. Stuart informed Hope that "in the Spring it was really delightful to trace its windings, so green and fresh were the trees which fringed its banks."

"You are something of a poet, I expect," said she, "and are never at a loss to discover beauty in anything."

"No, indeed," he replied; I am but a plain, plodding farmer, and really feel thankful to Heaven that I am not cursed with so fatal a gift as poetry or music."

"You surprise me," said she. "Few people would speak in this manner."

"I have a friend," he replied, "who has taught me a lesson in this respect. I believe that this gift has been the blight of his life. His ideas of perfection are so high, his nature so intensely sensitive, that he suffers where ordinary mortals would enjoy themselves."

"Yet perhaps he sees pleasure where others do not," she answered. "I would like to see a real, live poet. I never knew one in my life."

An amused smile swept over Edgar Stuart's face, but he made no reply to this last speech. Somehow they had gotten separated a considerable distance from the rest of the crowd, who had ridden on without stopping, and now

they rode a little faster to get near them. The rapid motion prevented them from talking much, but once more with their companions, there was a merry interchange of words and gay laughter, whose cause could be traced to nothing except that they all felt well and were enlivened by the healthy exercise. Mr. Young, though riding with Miss Stuart, often turned to speak to Hope, until the former lady felt half offended at his indifference to herself. Hope noticed this and appeared so absorbed in Mr. Stuart's conversation as to give Mr. Young no chance to address her without a breach of etiquette on his part, and so Miss Stuart's equanimity was restored. Mr. Young then determined to pique our heroine by a show of devotion to Hattie, but he was never more baffled in his life. The most skillful observer could not have told that Hope had any favorite in the crowd, if indeed she had. While riding with Edgar, she was all attention to him, but once more at the house, she was chatting and laughing with all alike. Towards sundown the young men rode off to the post-office, a mile distant.

"I wish Mr. Rodney Gilbert had come to-day," said Hattie Stuart, after they had taken their departure. "I asked him to do so, but he made some excuse about being too busy."

They were in the parlor now, and Mary Stuart chanced to be standing near a window. "Why, sister Hattie, who is this?"

A crimson glow mounted to Hattie's cheeks as she glanced out. "Mr. Gilbert, I do declare," said she. "I am surprised."

Hope was a little agitated, as she felt sure that after such a flattering description being given of her she would certainly appear to disadvantage before Mr. Gilbert. She had probably never looked less attractive than she did upon her introduction to him. Her very wish to appear well

seemed to have the contrary effect upon her. She was reserved and diffident, while the Misses Stuart were chattering away like magpies. Rodney Gilbert, she observed, was a tall, athletic man, some thirty years old, with dark hair and beard, and piercing gray eyes—not strikingly handsome, yet equally as far from being homely. He was well dressed in black, and wore a diamond ring on his little finger, which from its looks must have been a very costly one. For the brief while that he was in the parlor she remembered but little except that he seemed very quiet and uninteresting, speaking but one or two words to her, while she spoke as few in return, and it was with a feeling of relief that she saw him go out to rejoin the gentlemen. Two young ladies came just as he went out, and Mary and Hattie led the way upstairs for them to remove their hats and cloaks. Thinking their absence limited to a moment or two, Hope remained in the parlor. The bay window, filled (with the exception of a small space just large enough for one seat,) with rare plants, seemed a pleasant place to her, and placing an ottoman there she seated herself. Twilight had gathered in the room, and save the low flicker of the fire-light, it was completely in shadow. After some time Hope grew impatient at the continued absence of the girls, and was about to rejoin them upstairs, when the door opened and Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Young entered the apartment, and without ever glancing toward her, seated themselves before the fire. They were in animated conversation and the unexpected mention of her own name caused her to start in surprise and her heart to beat more rapidly. Luckily neither of the gentlemen noticed her presence and she became an unwilling listener to the following conversation :

“Upon my word, Young,” remarked Rodney, “I was never more disappointed in my life than I was to-day.”

“How so?” inquired Mr. Young.

“Why, I was introduced to Miss Caldwell this evening,

and from your description I expected to see a young lady who was perfection itself, and though I cannot say she is ugly, yet she fell very far below my expectations. She lacks brightness and color."

"I judge for myself in regard to beauty, Gilbert, and still think Miss Caldwell lovely."

"Well, there is no accounting for taste, and, after all, it is best for us not to be rivals," rejoined Mr. Gilbert.

"Rivals!" echoed Mr. Young, mockingly. "You know me too well for that. Miss Hope is to me a pretty, interesting girl, with whom I expect to have a pleasant time, but nothing serious will come of it, you may depend upon that."

The reader can judge in what an unpleasant position Hope was placed at this time. How fervently did she wish that she had either gone with the other girls, or else had let her presence be known at once to the gentlemen. And how to extricate herself from her present predicament she could not tell. Fortunately for her, at that moment Mr. Stuart called the two, and without noticing her, they left the apartment. Quietly, yet with all possible haste, she made her escape from the parlor and rejoined her girl companions, who were not yet sufficiently beautified to go down stairs. She determined to act as though she had not heard words not intended for her ear, had not caught a peep at scenes behind the curtain, but the burning blood rushed to her cheeks, rendering her tenfold more beautiful, and a brighter light flashed in her dark eyes. She could scarcely account for the emotions which caused her heart to beat wildly. "What did she care for the opinion of Mr. Young or of Mr. Gilbert, that their praise or dispraise should affect her? No," she decided, "she was quite independent of the good opinion of either." Yet had she been alone, there is no doubt that she would have indulged in a hearty cry, without reference to the why or wherefore of it. As

it was, she choked back the bitter feelings and proceeded to array herself in another dress preparatory to supper. For years she had not looked so pretty. Her dress was one which had been remodeled, but it fitted her so well, and was trimmed with such taste, as to look really elegant. A black cashmere, with satin trimmings, relieved by white lace at the neck and in the sleeves, and a scarlet bow at the throat ; it set off her dark skin to advantage, and the diamond breast-pin fastening her bow was rivaled by the brightness of her eyes. The jetty hair was arranged in heavy plaits, tied by a scarlet ribbon, and little tendrils nestled around her brow and temples, giving an added sweetness to her face, which, with the vivid coloring lent it by excitement, was perfect. Her companions could not forbear commenting on her appearance and compliments were showered upon her by the girls. Perhaps Rodney Gilbert felt like retracting his opinion in regard to her beauty ; certain it is that he could not keep from looking at her almost more than politeness demanded, and Mr. Young tried to be very devoted. Strange enough, it seemed to the other girls that these two gentlemen appeared to be less favored by Hope than the others present. Several times in the course of the evening she had an opportunity of saying sarcastic things to them, which she improved to the utmost. To Mr. Young, in particular, she was almost merciless, yet so witty withal, that he admired her even when her cutting speeches wounded him the most. Rodney Gilbert wondered at the change that had come over her in a few brief hours, and could scarcely believe her to be the same being he had met with in the early part of the evening. Gay, brilliant, witty and sarcastic at one moment ; in the next, womanly and pathetic, revealing by occasional flashes a brightness of imagination and depth of intellect quite unusual in a young and pretty girl ; it is not to be wondered at that she proved very attractive both to him and to

Mr. Gilbert. The latter little thought that his words, "she lacks brightness and color," were present in her mind whenever he spoke to her, and that the certainty of his indifference to her or to her looks caused her to feel entirely independent of his opinion and gave a dash of recklessness to her feelings which made her show to the very best advantage.

The evening passed off very pleasantly. There was music and sparkling chat, gay laughter and badinage, checkers and cards. In this last amusement Rodney Gilbert and Hope declined to participate, consequently they were left to entertain each other. She did not admire his manner. "He was eccentric," she decided; "not very pleasant either." There was a bitterness about him that she did not like—a blase, wearied air, a contempt for the world, and a dissatisfaction for all things "under the sun," which though akin to her own way at times, was not attractive to her. Altogether she was as far from fancying him as he had been her.

"You do not sing, I believe, Miss Caldwell," he remarked.

"Not often," she replied; "my voice is not very strong, and though I love music, I fall so far short of my imagination of a musician that I dislike very much to play and sing for company."

"I am utterly indifferent to music unless it is of the finest kind," said he wearily, almost rudely, Hope thought; then he rejoined, "most young ladies assume so many airs when asked to perform on any musical instrument, for the amusement of others, that it is really a matter of relief to me when they are through playing, and I hardly ever force my feelings enough to make any such request of them; but I would really like to hear you."

"Why?" she inquired shortly.

"I can hardly tell you myself, except that I imagine that you would sing to suit my taste, would express in

music the real thoughts and feelings of the heart, instead of some sentimental nonsense about 'music, love and flowers.' I do detest such trash. Now I think that the 'Captive Knight,' or 'Auld Lang Syne,' or 'Auld Robin Gray' would hardly suffer in your hands. I think the intense pathos—the deep, earnest feeling of such songs as these—would have intenser meaning and cause more thrilling emotion when sung by you."

"Then you are very much mistaken," said Hope laughingly, "for I sing none of those songs. I am no musician, as I told you just now, and must really decline performing for you, but," she continued, "I have heard of your skill in music and would be delighted to hear you."

"Upon my word, you are cool," he replied. "After refusing positively to gratify me, you in the same breath ask me to oblige you. That is reversing the golden rule. It is making your neighbor return good for your evil, instead of your doing so toward him. Well, be it so ; I will show my Christian character, or obliging disposition, whichever you may choose to think it, by playing and singing for you until you are tired."

Later in the evening he fulfilled his promise, and as Hope listened to his rich, mellow voice, with impassioned earnestness ringing in its tones, or else recklessly gay, as the subject required, she found herself moved almost to tears by its music, and no longer marveling that he was difficult to please, nor blaming him for it. He seemed scarcely the same being while singing. The bitter, misanthropic look was gone, and in its place a mournful, melancholy expression took possession of his countenance. He sang one song which particularly attracted Hope. It was a story telling of fondest love met by the blackest perfidy ; of a ruined life, wrecked by the falsehood of a beloved one. Mr. Stuart said to Hope, who had sat spell-bound as Mr. Gilbert sang :

"I expect Rodney Gilbert is the author of that song, it sounds so much like him."

"It is beautiful," she murmured, tears glistening on her lashes. To herself she said, "I wonder if that is Mr. Gilbert's experience: if so, it is like mine." For the remainder of the evening she was a little dreamy. Her reflections involuntarily wandered back to the past of her life, and once or twice she found herself struggling to keep her thoughts on the real, actual present. Rodney had but little more to say to her, and she could scarcely tell whether she liked or disliked him. That there was some mystery about him she felt sure; no one could ever sing like that without some depth of feeling, yet she disliked the mocking tones that he sometimes assumed, the irony which was apparent in much that he said, his bitter sarcasm and seeming contempt for some things that she felt dear; and then, too, she mentally accused him of deceit, in trying to flatter her after disparaging her to Mr. Young. "I wish I had not seen him; he has affected me unpleasantly, and yet I never heard such superb singing in my life before," she thought; "but he is a vain, sarcastic fellow, and I never expect to really like either him or Daniel Young." And so puzzled and perplexed, she retired to dream over the incidents of the preceding day.

CHAPTER IX.

The Sabbath after the events we have just recorded was a lovely day, and the group of young people, who expected to attend the church, some three miles from Mr. Stuart's, were in the gayest spirits—too gay, indeed, for the occasion. In some way, Hope scarcely knew how, Mr. Gilbert

contrived to be her escort, and his elegant phaeton, drawn by two milk-white horses, was the admiration of the crowd who started off together that morning. The ride was delightful. The morning air was bracing, although the sun shone brightly over the landscape, and it was a luxury but to breathe it. Bathed in the pleasant sunshine and inhaling the wintry air, with pleasant surroundings in every respect, our heroine ceased to remember the trials of the past, and for the time was purely happy. Rodney Gilbert did not converse in such a manner as entirely to dissipate her unpleasant impressions of him, yet she liked him better than she had done the day before. Conversation in this brief ride turned on many themes. Poetry and poets were discussed in turn, and after mentioning several favorite authors, Hope remarked :

"I have lately read a piece in a magazine entitled, 'Passing Thoughts,' which interested me. I have a volume of poetry by the same author. Do you remember seeing the poem?"

"Yes," said he, "I have read it."

"I do not think it striking in regard to style," she replied, "yet I feel that I would like to know the writer. I sympathize with the feelings expressed in the poem, the weariness of life, the loathing of all that people generally hold dear. Surely some hidden sorrow must have sapped the springs of happiness ere he wrote in such a manner." For a moment Mr. Gilbert looked earnestly, scrutinizingly at Hope—a glance which she remembered afterwards, though not noticing it particularly just then. A smile illumined his dark countenance, beautifying it wonderfully.

"Perhaps some day Fate may gratify your wish, but even then you may be disappointed. Authors are not always pleasant people."

"I do not imagine the author of 'Passing Thoughts' a

pleasant person. I picture to myself one having a morose, gloomy disposition, who looks on the bitter side of human life, yet who has some noble, redeeming qualities—perhaps generosity, a love of truth, a hatred of oppression and scorn of meanness and hypocrisy.”

An indescribable expression pervaded the countenance of Rodney Gilbert as Hope uttered these words; his face glowed, his eyes sparkled, with what emotion it would be difficult to determine. During the remainder of the ride he was very quiet, saying but little, and that on commonplace topics, and Hope wondered what was the matter. On driving up to the church they were honored by the gaze of many curious eyes, and she was almost discomposed by it. Once in the house and seated, she felt more at ease. There were but few people there, nearly all of the male and some of the female portion of the congregation being outside in the sunshine. Old ladies, wrapped up warmly in thick shawls, with veils tied over their bonnets around their head and ears to protect them from the cold, were gossiping together, some of them dipping snuff as they conversed. Young girls in their best array, with an expression of conscious beauty on their faces, were laughing and talking in quite a lively strain, while mothers, with their infants in their arms, were discussing their domestic trials together; one telling of what a terrible time she had when her youngest child cut its teeth, and another going into a long recital of the trouble she underwent when her little ones took the measles, and so on through the whole gauntlet of suffering to be run in a household of ordinary size. These narrations, though, were evidently of more interest to the narrators than to their auditors. Human sympathy is a plant of a very singular nature.

The old-fashioned tune of “Ortonville” was raised by one of the few occupants of the church, and as its first notes fell upon their ears the crowd outside began to enter

the building, though in quite an irregular fashion. The voices by which it was sung were not at all well trained, yet it awoke very sweet emotions in the heart of our heroine. For the time all the bitter experience of her past life seemed swept away by the old-timed melody ; she felt like a new creature. But as the sweet sounds died away she drifted off into idle reverie and her mental vision was filled with castles of hope based on an earthly foundation.

The preacher on this occasion was Mr. Ransom. It seemed to her a long time since the first sermon she had heard him preach, yet in reality it was but a few short weeks. In the musical tones peculiar to him he read the opening hymn, prayed a most fervent prayer, and then came the words of the text : " Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Mr. Ransom first mentioned the circumstances under which these words were spoken. He drew a graphic word picture of the eastern scene. Listening to him one could, in imagination, behold it ; the hot noonday sun blazing down on Samaria ; the tired God-man sitting down at the well awaiting the return of his disciples with " the food that perisheth," and the plain, matter-of-fact Samaritan woman coming to draw water and wondering at the words that Jesus spake, not comprehending their meaning. It required but little effort to fancy that one heard the conversation between Jesus and the woman, in which He endeavored to lead her thoughts away from the water that perishes to that which is springing up into " everlasting life." The preacher explained what was meant by " this water." He compared all earthly things to the water which, if one drink, he shall thirst again. He spoke of the transitory and unsatisfactory nature of worldly enjoy-

ments and their utter inability to satisfy the craving of an immortal soul. We subjoin an extract from his sermon on this subject :

“To-day is all brightness ; the balmy breezes bear to our delighted senses the perfume of violets ; the first footprints of the Spring have left their impress on field and forest, and nature thrills with the rapture of returning life, and we, in unison with her, feel our pulses beat with gladness. We have enough ; our friends are around us ; no anxious care besets us, and we ask ourselves, ‘Why cannot every one be happy on this earth, which is itself so beautiful and so well prepared to make its inhabitants happy ?’ But a change comes ; clouds and rain obscure the loveliness of the landscape ; our friends are dead or absent, and we, perchance, sick both in body and mind, and in our gloom and despondency we exclaim, ‘This is a wretched life after all, and hardly worth living for.’ Oh ! my brethren, does not this prove to us that whoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again ? Thirst ! yea, die of maddening thirst ! Witness Alexander weeping for worlds to conquer ; Napoleon chained, Prometheus-like, to a desert rock and dying with a quenchless thirst of power ; and Lord Byron who, in the eloquent words of Pollok,

“ Drank every cup of joy ; heard every trump of Fame ;
Drank early, deeply drank, then died of thirst,
Because there was no more to drink.”

And as these eminent examples of men whom the world calls great, died with unsatisfied longings after the unattainable, so now this principle holds good through every rank of life. Everywhere men and women are toiling after the bread which perisheth, after the water which “if a man drink he shall thirst again.” To-day, in the name of the Saviour, I offer you the water which “if a man drink he shall never thirst, but which shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” This water is

given to those alone who believe in Christ and obey His word. But, Christians, you object—have trials, aye, sometimes are sorely afflicted ; is there then no longing for ease and peace and happiness, no thirst for the pleasures of the world ? Thank God, they do have trials, thank God, there are moments when they are sorely depressed : yet by His mercy even tribulation is not an evil, but the sweet means of filling the heart with entire devotedness to Christ, and of affording a rapture that the world can never know. This water does, then, indeed, “spring up into everlasting life ;” earth and earthly things fade from the vision, and the hope of eternal joy is so strong as to cause us to forget the petty cares and sorrows of the way. What are a few discomforts, a little wetting of the rain or blowing of the chilling wind, when at the end of our journey we expect a lovely abode, where we may reside for all time ? And what are our few tribulations when at the end of our pilgrimage we expect to dwell in Heaven through eternal ages ? “Springing up into eternal life !” What a promise is this ! Can we realize it, can we grasp it ? Think of the pleasure filling our hearts on meeting with a long absent friend, of the sweet emotion excited by some delicious strain of music, or by the sight of some lovely object in Nature or Art ; think of the bliss of mutual affection, of the joys springing up around the family fireside, or the rapture pervading our being at the completion of some long cherished scheme ; then imagine all these separate delights combined in one ecstatic throb of bliss, and even then we would fall far short of compassing the ineffable happiness of Heaven. “Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for those who love Him.” Think, then, you who refuse to partake of “this water of life,” of how terrible a thing it will be to hear the sublime harmonies of the redeemed, ringing through the

streets of Heaven, and to feel that "you yourselves are cast out!" Be wise in time, drink now, drink freely of this water which Jesus gives, and it shall be in you a "well of water springing up into everlasting life."

For one hour Hope listened to Mr. Ransom's sermon, as with impassioned earnestness, his whole soul beaming in his eyes, he offered the water of life to the sinner, and even when she heard his words no longer, the impression made by them did not fade away. In after life the seed sown that day in her heart sprang up, yielding an abundant harvest. Riding back from church with Rodney Gilbert that afternoon, she was a little abstracted, and he, too, was not very talkative. "Some shadow must have crossed his path," she thought, he was so absent-minded. She was almost glad when they reached Mr. Stuart's gate. Herbert Ransom spent the evening there, and Hope had a long, quiet chat with him, revealing to him her newly awakened convictions of sin and her serious thoughts of becoming a Christian; and she awoke a new interest in her behalf in his sympathetic heart. The evening hours sped pleasantly away. Mr. Ransom had a happy talent of turning the tide of conversation to profitable subjects without a touch of sanctimoniousness, and was a very pleasant person around the fireside. Once or twice in the course of the evening he and Mr. Gilbert exchanged a few words, and Hope noticed that they seemed very intimate friends, and when in his prayer that night the preacher invoked God's choicest blessings on those who were "tossed by tempests and not comforted," as well as on those who had wandered "far off from the fold," she could not help thinking that he had herself and her discontented friend in mind at the time.

CHAPTER X.

While on a visit to the neighborhood where Hope Caldwell taught we determined to call upon her at her school-room, as we wished to see whether her plan of instruction pleased us. It was a lovely spring morning, doors and windows were open, letting in the sunshine and fresh air. Teacher and scholars were standing, but with heads reverently bowed as we came to the door, for the morning prayer was being read. Too diffident to pray aloud in her own language, Hope made use of that of others. When the reading was over she came forward, inviting us in and giving us comfortable seats. While she was reading the roll-call we availed ourselves of the opportunity thus afforded to take a survey of the school-room and of the scholars. We were struck with the perfect neatness of the house and of the pupils. Clean hands and faces, nicely combed hair, shoes properly tied and nails carefully pared was the rule, not the exception. The teacher herself, though dressed with extreme plainness, presented an exceedingly tidy appearance, and her every surrounding betokened neatness and refinement. The little table immediately in front of her chair bore the weight of a large dictionary on one side and that of a Bible on the other, while between the books was a glass containing a bouquet of lovely flowers. On the right of her seat was a row of shelves intended for books of reference, and Hope's herbarium ; on the left a similar row, serving as a depository for every object gathered in her walks to and from school which she thought could interest the children. The bodies of insects, mosses and lichens, some stuffed birds and animals, pebbles, different kinds of wood, etc., filled these

shelves. These we ascertained from her were made useful in the daily "object lesson" which she was in the habit of giving the pupils. There was one of her own drawings hung just above her chair, which was a subject of continual interest and remark from many of the scholars. In every available spot was placed something to attract the children—something to awaken their ambition and to inspire in them new resolves to be wiser and better. Little simple engravings, cut from discarded magazines or papers, each picture bearing a history, which had been faithfully narrated by the teacher, were hung around the blackened walls. The frames were of such simple and cheap construction as to be easily made by Hope. Bits of stiff pasteboard, the frames of broken slates, covered with fancy paper, were some of the materials employed in fashioning them, and they answered every purpose. After the reading of the roll-call she arranged the pupils in two lines facing each other, calling them out by their numbers in order that there might be no confusion in taking their places. Then, while thus arranged, they repeated in unison "The Sovereigns of England"—that epitome of the history of the kings of that country in verse. This they all knew perfectly, and kept perfect time in their repetition of it. A song followed next in order, entitled, "Make Your Mark;" after which they all returned to their seats. A class in spelling next occupied her attention. "The old blue-backed spelling book" held its own at her school. The lesson was recited "by heart," then some of the words were given out to be written on the blackboard and on slates. "I follow the plan inculcated in "Swan's Speller," she informed me. After the spelling lesson came one in arithmetic. Here she exercised the "memory" in requiring a perfect knowledge of the tables without reference to the book; the reasoning power in the analysis of every problem given the pupil. "The memory," she remarked, "is a good, faithful pack-

horse, and one whose efficiency is increased by exercise ; yet it must not be allowed to take the precedence of understanding or of reason. Still it certainly gives one great advantage to have a quick and retentive memory, and that can only be gained in the majority of pupils by the most careful training." She gave out some examples not contained in their arithmetic to the scholars—little, practical questions—which were calculated to impress the idea deep upon their minds that arithmetic is not a matter of theory, but an every-day affair, required in every walk of life.

Her teaching geography was unlike what we had been heretofore accustomed to, and pleased us greatly. "I have," she said to her pupils, "striven to give you a clear idea of what is meant by the natural division of land and water, as also of the meaning of each division. You have been with me in my rambles. In the little streams along our pathway we have seen capes, islands, straits, isthmuses, and other divisions of land or water. I have shown you hills and valleys, and explained to you what is meant by mountains, by the ocean, etc. I have also taught you how to 'box the compass.' You know what bounds your school-room at every point. Now I shall draw a map of a place with which you are all familiar." In an incredibly short time she had outlined a perfect map of the county in which she taught, with all its divisions into townships, and its boundaries, together with its rivers, towns and railroads. The children were all delighted with it and eager to try their hand in drawing one for themselves. They soon had the names of the townships and of the counties bounding it in their memory, as well as its population, etc. Then she gave them a little of its history, striving to impress these facts upon their youthful minds. We felt sure that this lesson was never forgotten by them.

A recitation in grammar came next, but she informed us

that she was badly discouraged in this study. "Grammar may help develop the reason by the analysis it requires, but correct speaking is never gained, or at least rarely, if ever gained, save by association with those who cultivate correct habits of speaking. I make it a rule to point out every error which they are guilty of to each and all of my pupils, yet unless their daily associates talk grammatically, I almost despair of ever making them do so."

A reading lesson was the last before the noon recess. Hope was sadly exercised in this. Some of her scholars had acquired a sing-song way of reading before she had ever taken them in hand; some read too rapidly; others did not observe their stops; with nearly all she had had sore trials, and months of faithful teaching had not eradicated the seeds of evil habits acquired before she had ever seen them. "Over and over again is the rule here," she remarked to me. "I sometimes grow almost heartsick at the prospect. Yet I see some improvement. I always require the children to tell me the subject of their lesson, and what is meant by what they read, ere expecting them to read with even ordinary expression. We cannot read well what we do not understand."

After recess came a dictionary lesson, in which, besides reciting by rote, she required each of her pupils to write a sentence in which some word contained in the lesson was rightly employed. This was to test their knowledge of the real meaning of the words. Writing came next, conducted on the old, mechanical plan of writing after copies, though the teacher was very faithful in seeing that they held their pens correctly and that they took pains in writing. Her pupils had, she informed me, "improved very much of late." Then came a history lesson. It was a sketch of the life of Christopher Columbus, as contained in the History of the United States. "To-day they will read this history with the name of the person whose history it is;

to-morrow I shall read the history and shall require them to give me the name," she informed me. A little while before school was dismissed she read a simple story, requiring each scholar to write an epitome of it on his or her slate. "This was a most improving exercise," she said, "and soon gave a scholar not only correct habits of writing and spelling, but even some idea of composition." Some calisthenic exercises, very well performed, ended the day's lesson.

The reader must remember that we are simply describing a teacher who was destitute of all those advantages which Normal Schools and Teacher's Institutes now afford the profession. Hope had taken up this calling, as thousands of others do, merely to make a little money ; but once engaged in it, the work was of absorbing interest to her. Teaching she regarded as one of the noblest tasks, second only to the preaching of the Gospel, and her ambition was awakened to fill up the full measure of her duty. She read, thought and studied in order to be better prepared to teach, and in some way, she scarcely knew how, nearly everything reminded her of her scholars. True, at times the regular succession of tasks was a little tiresome to her ; then again the hours sped swiftly away, almost too swiftly.

Three weeks had elapsed since her visit to Mr. Stuart's before she saw any of the party she had met there. Daniel Young had lately become acquainted with a beautiful young lady in a neighboring town, and with characteristic fondness for novelty had devoted himself to her, as if in almost total forgetfulness of Hope. Herbert Ransom was the first person of that pleasant crowd whom she saw. He was to preach on the Sabbath at the little church near Mr. Watkins', and spent the preceding night under the hospitable roof of that gentleman. Hope enjoyed the time passed in his society very much. In the course of

their conversation Rodney Gilbert's name was mentioned, and subsequently she spoke of "Passing Thoughts."

"I never read that poem," said Herbert, "without regret. No one ever stood a fairer chance of being a benefactor to his race than Rodney; of no one did I ever hope more, though I am his junior by several years; yet his poem conveys a just impression of his feelings now. In some way, I scarcely know how, he became soured, and is one who doubts almost everyone, and is, I fear, far from God—a wanderer from the fold."

"Is Mr. Gilbert," Hope exclaimed, half breathless with surprise, while a crimson glow dyed cheek and brow; "is Mr. Gilbert the author of 'Passing Thoughts?'"

"Why, did you not know it?" he inquired.

"Know it! no indeed," said she. "I never even dreamed of such a thing."

"I thought," he replied, "that our community was too proud of having a real, live author in their midst not to inform a stranger of it; but this only fulfills the words of Scripture: 'A prophet is not without honor save in his own country, and among his own kin.'"

Hope felt vexed. To think that she had expressed herself so freely in regard to "Passing Thoughts" before Mr. Gilbert, and had expressed, too, so earnest a desire to become acquainted with the author! She could now understand the meaning of his scrutinizing glance and could appreciate the amused smile which irradiated his face while she was talking to him on that subject. What if he should deem her ignorance assumed—a mere pretence to give her real opinion of his work? The thought was to her a vexatious one. "It seems to me," she reflected, "that Mr. Rodney Gilbert is destined to be my evil genius, and I wish I had never seen him."

Mr. Ransom noticed the cloud on her countenance and kindly inquired its cause. True to her frank disposition, she told him. He laughed.

"I can understand your feelings," he said, "yet I cannot say that I am sorry for the occurrence. Rodney perhaps needs to be told his faults, and all unconsciously as you did so, it may effect good."

"But to think," said she, "of me, a stranger, telling him that I thought him morose and gloomy, and that his style was not to my liking; it is too bad."

"I have made just such mistakes," he replied, "and oftentimes have become the best of friends to those with whom my acquaintance began so inauspiciously. The ludicrous associations connected with our dawning intimacy served but to weld the chain of affection faster."

He smiled mischievously, while a vivid blush mounted even to Hope's brow, and she endeavored to change the subject, in which effort she was kindly assisted by the minister. There was something in Herbert Ransom's disposition to inspire one with the utmost confidence in him, and as she conversed with him our heroine felt, before the evening was over, that if she ever needed a friend he would be one on whom she could rely.

On the Sabbath he preached again, and though Hope did not fancy his sermon as well as she had done the last one which she had heard him preach, yet knowing of and trusting in his piety as she did, every word he spoke made a deep impression on her heart.

All of her recent acquaintances were at church save the one who, though in no agreeable manner, haunted her thoughts. Rodney Gilbert was not there. Daniel Young was paying very marked attention to a young lady who had come with him, and though he spoke, their meeting was not altogether as cordial as heretofore. Hattie and Mary Stuart and Estelle Moran greeted her very affectionately.

"Has Mr. Gilbert called on you?" inquired Hattie.

"No, indeed," she replied; "I have not thought of such a thing."

"He spoke of doing so," said Miss Stuart, "and I thought perhaps he had been. He admires you very much."

"I was not aware of it," replied Hope coldly, and the subject was immediately dropped.

Hattie and Mary went home with her, and judging from their conversation, she decided that Mr. Gilbert occupied a large share of their thoughts. She determined within herself rather to avoid him than to strive to gain his notice. She felt intuitively that should he ever pay her much attention it would put an end to the friendship existing between her and the two girls. Monday was a cloudy day, and she was uncomfortable, both in mind and body. Her head ached and it seemed to her that the children were more than usually idle and trying to the temper. She struggled against every feeling of impatience for a considerable time, but as one aggravation after another came to try her, she grew angry, for the first time in her school life, and spoke crossly to the children. In five minutes after she was ashamed of herself. How could she, she asked herself, blame the scholars for their conduct, when she herself had not learned the lesson of self-command? At recess the reflection still haunted her. She sat down at a desk, bowed her head upon it and, woman-like, gave vent to her feelings by a shower of remorseful tears. A sudden step caused her to look up, and there in the doorway stood the last person whom she expected or wished to see just now, Rodney Gilbert. He seemed half inclined to leave as he noticed her agitation, but changed his mind, went forward, and with a sympathizing look on his face, remarked:

"Excuse me, Miss Caldwell, for intruding upon you, but I could not resist the temptation of calling as I passed."

Hope shook hands with him as he extended his hand, but could not for three minutes articulate one word. Then she said:

"I know it seems very foolish in me, Mr. Gilbert, but the truth must be told at all hazards. I was just having a cry because I lost my temper this morning. I hardly felt well enough to teach, and the trial was more than I could bear patiently."

"I wonder you can endure it at all," said he warmly ; "but I should not trouble myself about the children. They are as happy now as kings. I stopped to look at their play-houses just now and they really entertained me very much. You are doing a good work here, Miss Caldwell."

"Not half so good as I wish to do," a sudden enthusiasm lighting her face and shining in her eyes ; "yet with all its vexations I sometimes think it is a noble vocation, though accident, and not choice, caused me to become a teacher, and perhaps were I rich now, I would not teach."

"What would be if you had your choice?" he inquired.

A sudden crimson suffused her cheeks ; it was almost like betraying herself to avow her predilection for drawing and painting, but after a moment she said :

"An artist is what I should like to be above all things. I think if I had it in my power to study painting under the best masters and to go to Rome, and if I could embody my ideas and thus attain to my ideal of perfection in painting, I should be perfectly happy."

"Perfectly happy!" he repeated ; "a woman perfectly happy from gratified ambition? You remember the words of one who must have known the depths of the feminine heart—herself a noble woman: 'Thou shalt have fame, Oh mockery!'"

"Yes," she replied, "I remember it well, but I remember, too, one greater than she said that 'All is vanity and vexation of spirit.'"

"I believe," said he, with an earnestness that surprised her, "that there are degrees of happiness, even in this

world, and I am inclined to think that love bears away the precedence from fame."

"Perhaps so," she replied in a very matter-of-fact manner, "yet may there not be sham in all?"

Rodney Gilbert was disappointed in her answer. He had expected, as quite usual for him, to hear a blushing denial of any knowledge of love, instead of the common-sense she took of the subject and the coolness with which she treated it. Hope was a mystery to him, as he was to her. Just then she glanced at her watch.

"Our conversation is out, Mr. Gilbert, for the present. I will have to ring the bell for school again. I trust the next time you see me I will not be in tears."

"May they never flow from a more serious cause," said he gallantly, as he took his leave. "*Au revoir*, Miss Caldwell."

It rained after his departure, and the shower had not ceased when the hour for dismissing the scholars arrived. Hope disliked the idea of walking home through the wet, but there was no hope for it. Luckily she had her waterproof, overshoes and umbrella, and she started bravely on through the shower, striving with all her might to keep her skirt from contact with the mud with one hand, while she grasped the umbrella in the other. She had not advanced fifty steps before she heard the sound of horse's feet and the rattle of wheels, and in a moment Rodney Gilbert rode up in his phaeton. He was out of it in a second.

"Allow me to see you home, Miss Caldwell. I hurried to the school-house to be in time, but you were gone. The boys, too, can go with us."

Hope would rather have walked than for him to have seen her in her present plight, but she accepted his offer nevertheless. About half way to Mr. Watkins they met that gentleman in his buggy coming for Hope and his children, and just then the sun burst out shining through the drops of rain.

"You have forestalled me, I see, Mr. Gilbert ; well, I expect you will not object to my taking Jamie and Willie. I will not take Miss Caldwell, however."

"No, indeed, I would not submit to that," said Rodney in a jesting tone.

"You might have to if I should choose to leave you," she replied.

"You would not be so ungenerous as to do that, I know, and besides, if it does not continue to rain, you will oblige me by going with me to see Miss Estelle Moran, will you not?"

"I do not know," she said. "I am hardly fit to see, or rather to visit, a stranger, and besides, I may get to school too late."

"School again ! Miss Caldwell, take my advice ; do not aspire, in your early youth too, to a martyr's fate, without his crown, as assuredly will be your lot if you let your work shut you out of all pleasure. May I picture your future if you pursue this course?"

She gave a laughing assent.

"You will spend all your youth in the narrow routine of the school-room, for you will be too absorbed in your work to care for love and marriage ; and when your best days are spent in the vain effort to please people who will pay you the least price they can procure your services for ; when the bloom of youth is gone, you will see yourself edged aside for girls far inferior to you, and your whole future life will be embittered by vain regrets for youth wasted in martyrdom to duty."

"A terrible picture," said she. "You are worse than Cassandra herself."

"May I reverse it?"

"Certainly ; I should like to see it reversed."

"Spend your youth as it should be ; give yourself all needful recreation ; enjoy your life ; fall in love with some

fellow worthy of you, and in future years you will have some one to love and take care of you, and will be the guiding star in some pleasant home."

"Perhaps," she said doubtfully; "but love cannot come at one's bidding, and your picture is not always realized, even when people seem to marry happily."

"Very true; but I think the chances for happiness much better in a married than in a single life."

"Let me describe my life as I hope it to be, should I continue in my present profession."

"I am all attention," he replied.

"I shall work faithfully on, day after day, feeling that I am no drone in the great hive of life, but am a faithful worker. I shall live frugally and save up enough each year to enable me to live independently when youth has departed, and my last days I shall spend quietly but industriously, absorbed in books, in painting, in work, thinking and caring naught for who outshines me in society."

"There is no convincing you; you are a regular philosopher, I see. Still I hope for you, as I do for my other lady friends, that you will never be an old maid," said Rodney. "If you wish to do good you can carry out your schemes married as well as single. Marry one as good as my old schoolmate Herbert Ransom, and you will have your hands full assisting him in his good works."

"No, no; he seems too lofty in his aims, too lifted up above every-day motives to ever think of loving any one, far less a girl like I am, sinful and weak."

"A girl like you!" echoing her words. "He might feel proud of ever winning your regard."

A deep, deep blush dyed her cheeks as he said this, and she replied almost scornfully:

"A truce to compliments, if you please. I do not fancy them, and more particularly if I do not deem them sincere."

"Not sincere ! what reason have you for doubting me?"

"Probably a better one than you can imagine, but one which I should not like to tell you, and that reminds me—what did you think when I told you that I thought the author of 'Passing Thoughts' was a morose and gloomy person ? I know now who is the author, though I did not know it then."

"I thought that you spoke truth, though I must own it made me feel quite badly to think that you had so poor an opinion of me."

"Mr. Gilbert, I cannot help thinking that you speak ironically, yet as I cannot truthfully retract the opinion I then expressed, you will have to make the best of it. I am sorry if it hurt your feeling in any way. I did it unconsciously though, believe me."

"But you have your wish," said he ; "you know the author of 'Passing Thoughts.'"

"It is very strange," she replied.

"Quite romantic, is it not ?"

"Very," said she, absently.

By this time they had reached Mr. Watkins' gate. The rain had entirely ceased and the brief time before nightfall bade fair to be pleasant, and after a moment's hesitation, Hope decided to continue her ride to Mrs. Moran's. The rest of the way Rodney Gilbert entertained her with accounts of different scenes and incidents of his past life, and proved himself a very entertaining companion. Hope had not thought him handsome before, but when his dark eyes were lighted up with animation, and when in smiling he displayed a lovely set of teeth, he was certainly far better looking than the majority of men.

It was nightfall when they reached Mrs. Moran's. Estelle was in waiting to welcome them and conducted Hope into a room to lay aside her waterproof and hat, and thence into the parlor. To Hope's profound astonishment, Daniel

Young soon made his appearance, and was as cordial as ever. It was evident that Rodney Gilbert's attention to her had excited his spirit of rivalry. During that evening he was talking to her or promenading, while Rodney was paying especial attention to Estelle. There was music on the piano and singing. Later in the evening Nathan Allison came with a young lady, and these, with Mrs. Moran, formed quite a lively party. Hope, whenever she could, conversed with Mrs. Moran, who was a very pleasant companion. The hours sped by swiftly. Daniel Young continued to be unusually agreeable, though Hope could not forget his words that she had overheard, and treated him quite indifferently. Nathan Allison who seemed, Hope thought, in love with Estelle, helped them in singing. They were looking at the album together, and Hope noticed the next morning that the space occupied by Estelle's photograph was empty, and she judged rightly that the picture had been given him by Estelle. She had ever thought well of him, and could not help judging that he would prove a most excellent husband to any girl whom he might marry.

Once during the evening Rodney Gilbert sat beside Hope and looked over a volume containing many charming pictures of scenes in Greece and Italy. He watched her dark eyes glisten and sparkle as she surveyed the picture of the Coliseum.

"I have wandered among the ruins of the Coliseum by moonlight," said he, "and words would be entirely inadequate to describe the marvelous charm which lingers around it. The mind is oppressed with the tide of recollection which sweeps over it, surrounded by this relic of a dead but mighty past."

"Yet a past which I glory in thinking is forever past, notwithstanding the mystic spell attached to the old

Romans," she replied. "What is all the glory of Pagan Rome compared with the dazzling splendor of the nineteenth century?"

"Past! Present! Future! have they not all a charm of their own?"

"All but the present. You forget the verse which says:

'Still we tread the same causeway,
The present's still a cloudy day.'"

"Yes," said he, "the past has a dim, illusory charm of its own; the future, a glory thrown around it by a too sanguine imagination; and the present: are we not quite comfortable this evening?"

"Oh, yes; we have passed the evening very comfortably—music, mirth and social cheer have conspired to render it exceedingly agreeable to me."

"And the society of Mr. Young—has he not been a decided addition to the pleasure of the evening?" said he, with a scrutinizing look in his eyes.

"Not more so than every other member of this pleasant company," a spice of coolness in her tones, for she did not like this direct questioning.

Rodney Gilbert saw the expression half of anger, and hastily changed the subject.

The hour for retiring came all too early, and the morning sun was shining brightly when Hope awoke. After making her toilet she walked out on the piazza. Mrs. Moran's place was very pleasant, with long piazzas, wide rooms and a superfluity of windows; with ivy-wreathed trees in the front yards, the ivy forming a festoon from one tree to the other. Then there was a flower yard, though only a few flowers had survived the November frosts, and Hope thought she had never seen a place better suited to read and dream and meditate. "To dream of what or whom?" she soliloquized, and then involuntarily she thought of Greece and Rome, and with them of Rodney Gilbert.

Why should he haunt her thoughts? She did not really like him, yet something was ever throwing him in her path. "If I believed in an evil genius," thought she, "I should say that Rodney Gilbert is mine."

"Good morning, Miss Caldwell," said Daniel Young. "Will you accept of a present?" and he handed her a tiny bouquet—a geranium leaf and a late rosebud. She thanked him, took it and pinned it at her throat with her breast-pin. During the few moments before breakfast he did his best to play the agreeable, but Hope could never forget that he had spoken so carelessly of her, and he felt that there was an insuperable obstacle to their friendship, though very far from guessing the real truth. He ascribed his loss of favor to Rodney Gilbert or Herbert Ransom, he could not tell which.

Hope's ride to school that morning was a rapid one, and she came very near being out of time.

"Thank you, Miss Caldwell, for complying with my request," said Mr. Gilbert. "I have had a most enjoyable time."

"So have I, and my headache is completely cured, thanks to your skill. Fresh air, exercise and pleasant company are the best medicines after all."

"I should certainly take pleasure in administering these remedies whenever you are afflicted with a similar attack, but I shall not be here for four weeks. I am going to New York, and shall visit a friend in the upper part of the State upon my return, and shall not see you again under a month. Good bye."

He clasped the little hand very tightly when bidding her adieu, and though she said to herself that she neither admired nor liked him, an indefinable sense of loneliness crept over Hope as she caught the last glimpse of his vehicle disappearing in the distance. And her wonted tasks lost some of their interest to her, so much absorbed was she in pondering over the events of yesterday.

CHAPTER XI.

Hope worked on with unflagging interest in her school, rising betimes and sitting up beyond the usual bed-time of country people, to accomplish all that she had planned to do. Rodney Gilbert's advice to her, "not to make a martyr of herself," was by no means uncalled for, though destined to be disregarded by her. "A place for everything, everything in its place; a time for everything, everything in its time"—how easy it is to repeat these rules, yet how difficult to invariably observe them ourselves or to enforce their observance in others. Perhaps nothing in her school life gave our heroine more trouble than to require her pupils to carry out this precept. She had strictly forbidden borrowing in her school, believing it to be a habit extremely detrimental to the character, yet, as is the disposition of children, they were waiting for an opportunity every day to break this rule without punishment. We will give the reader a description of two little scenes in the school-room, one before and one after her making a rule against borrowing. One day before the necessity of such a requirement was apparent to her, (for all teachers must learn by experience,) Hope noticed that little Harry Ambler was not, as usual at that hour, ciphering on his slate.

"What is the matter, Harry?" she inquired.

"I haven't any pencil, Miss Hope."

"No pencil! what have you done with the one you had yesterday?"

"I loaned it to Miss Helen Hartwell and she lost it," said Harry, tears gathering in the brown eyes, both from grief at loss of the pencil and apprehension in regard to

some punishment being inflicted on him for allowing the needed article to be misplaced. What could be done? For the remainder of the evening Harry had to substitute some other lesson for his ciphering, as no crayons had yet been provided for the blackboard, and Hope then forbade her scholars to borrow pencil, slate or book from each other thereafter. Shortly after this she noticed another pupil idle who should have been ciphering. It was Mary Hartwell this time.

"Why are you idle, Mary?" she asked.

"Because, Miss Caldwell, I have no pencil, and you will not let us borrow. Violet Leonard would lend me one were it not against the rule."

"No," said Hope, "I cannot allow that. Study your tables this evening, and to-morrow I will see what can be done."

So on the morrow she bought a box of crayons and a number of pencils, and armed with these she expected to have peace for some time. But what child does not love a new article better than an old one? What child is it that will not willingly lose an old book, or slate, or pencil even, if the one by which it is replaced is not of half as good quality as the lost one? It required the utmost strictness in giving out crayons and pencils to the pupils in order to prevent wilful waste. Of course the teacher's patience was sorely tried, yet who could punish a child severely for using the two little words which so many grown people consider a sufficient excuse for every delinquency, "I forgot."

"I forgot, Miss Hope," said Roy Wilkins, "and put my pencil in my trousers' pocket, the pair I had on last week, and so I left the pencil home to-day."

"Did I not tell you to leave your pencil in your desk?"

"Yes, ma'am, but if I do somebody gets them."

That omnipresent "somebody," what a hard fellow he

is to get hold of ! And as of course the desks had no locks, no one could deny the justice of the charge, yet no one could be brought to punishment for it. Such was the, little vexations which Hope was called on to endure. Small in themselves, yet more trying to the patience than the severest stroke of fate ; the one stinging like a swarm of sand flies ; the other crushing out hope at one blow. But her life was not all darkness. There were times when, sorely tried, she was ready to exclaim with the Psalmist, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest ;" but at other times she rejoiced at the thought that she was a teacher, as she felt sure that next to parents, they have the greatest influence over the minds of the young.

We have mentioned three sisters, without calling their names, toward whom Hope felt an unbidden attachment spring up in her heart. Katharine, Cornelia and Nellie Turnage were kind, tender-hearted girls, who seemed never weary of accommodating their teacher, and of showing her by every act in their power that they loved her, and their present of flowers, brought so frequently when in season, afforded Hope as much real pleasure as though they had bestowed the costliest gifts. Toward her scholars, though, she tried to be strictly impartial. Nor was this a difficult matter to be, for with the majority of them, when one good quality was lacking, its want was amply supplied by another. Then, too, when one had a decided turn for one study, it was very apt to be deficient in something else, and when there was no especial talent for anything, Hope still regarded a pupil with interest, and her sympathy was more deeply awakened in behalf of those seemingly destitute of gifts than toward the more favored ones of her school. We have spoken of Johnnie Twining. It was really a joy to her to see what an abundant harvest the good seed sown in his heart was capable of bringing forth.

Poor little untrained boy ! firmness and gentleness combined were so new to him as to fill him with wonder and to cause him to yield a ready obedience to the commands of his teacher. He was never weary of bringing her anything which he thought would be of interest to her—sometimes flowers, at others a tiny pine cone, or an acorn, or a pebble, and she would explain to him something of the nature and history of each, to which explanation he would listen with the closest attention. Apart from all pecuniary consideration, was it not worth toiling for to rescue even one such child from ignorance and vice ? The naughty as well as the good boys were all objects of care, attention and deep interest to her. She contrived too, notwithstanding her strictness, to gain the love of each and all. But there was one of her pupils who would have won the affection of almost any instructor, so lovely was she in person and disposition, so charming in mind and manner. Her name was Violet Leonard, and the name seemed a fitting one for the little one who bore it. She was about seven years old, and was as fragile as a flower ; her cheeks sometimes aglow with color, and at others as pale as Alpine roses. Her eyes were of a clear, transparent blue, and were full of intellect, while the exquisite shape of her head, the delicacy of her hands and feet, and the almost indescribable expression of her face—an expression denoting extraordinary refinement, unusual talent and rare spirituality in one so young—invested her with a wonderful charm. Add to this a sweet, plaintive voice which touched the heart at once, and a way of asking questions and of making remarks all too deep for her tender years, and it was not to be marveled at that little Violet twined herself very closely around the heart of her teacher. Hope had heard, too, a bit of Mrs. Leonard's history which interested her deeply. She was a most lovely, religious, conscientious woman, so the neighbors said, and when she

married Mr. Leonard it was considered a most suitable match. He was young, handsome, talented, easy in manner and brilliant in conversation—possessed, too, of considerable means. Habits acquired in early youth, and the influence of evil associates after his marriage, were his ruin. That which has wrecked so many noble lives, which has blasted so many fond hopes, was his curse also. Intemperance had gradually blunted every generous feeling of his nature. His property dwindled away, and at last, much against his wife's wish, he opened a bar-room—"the grog shop at the forks of the road," the children called it. Our heroine pitied Mrs. Leonard deeply, and her interest in little Violet was enhanced by a knowledge of her mother's sad lot. Often during recess would Violet come in the school-room and, sitting down by her teacher, ask her strange questions of God and Heaven, and of the unseen world—queries too deep for the wisest to solve ; such as if she were to die now would she grow up in Heaven or would she remain a little child ; and if any of the angels lived in the moon and stars.

"Violet," said Hope one day, after this strange questioning, "run out and play, child. Don't trouble yourself with such matters as these now ; wait until you are grown."

"But suppose," said she, a strange, wistful expression in the blue eyes, "I never live to be grown. I will not find out."

"Oh yes," replied the teacher, "then you would know better than I do, for then you would be in Heaven with God and his good angels," and fearing the effect of such deep thought in one so young, she sent her out to play.

Violet's love for flowers was intense. She could scarcely pass one without wishing to pluck it, and would come laden with them so long as they lasted, and when the frost killed them she grieved over them as if they had been real live pets which had died. Hope was not personally ac-

quainted with Mrs. Leonard, as she had not yet called on her. She seldom visited of late years, Mrs. Watkins had informed her. Henry Leonard, Violet's brother, was a handsome, intelligent child, but partook more largely of his father's disposition than did his sweet little sister. It was a positive pleasure to teach such a child as she was—she was so studious and so anxious to please her teacher; but luckily for themselves, unluckily for Hope, the rest of her pupils were thorough children in disposition—full of romp and play, and not over anxious to learn. Our heroine made a resolution never to let a day pass without the children imbibing one or more new ideas, and never to let them merely repeat words without some insight into their meaning. For the purpose of developing their powers of observation and capacity for describing anything, she would sometimes require them to give a description of the simplest object, using correct terms and being perfectly true to nature in their delineation. This exercise she found not only useful to the children, but to herself. Every thing she learned was in some way turned to advantage in the school-room and made subservient to the noble end of developing the mental and moral powers of those entrusted to her charge. Even her cherished drawings and paintings, which had before occupied her time and attention, took a new coloring from her occupation. She planned off a picture entitled, "The Outcast," in which Johnnie Twining, as she first saw him, should appear, and another called "A Little Child Shall Lead Them," in which a child, with the face and form of little Violet, was beckoning to its parents from the skies.

About three or four weeks after Hope's visit to Estelle, and when December, with its chilling blasts, had ushered in the Winter season, there came a snow—a lovely snow, which was so infrequent an occurrence in this part of the country as to be hailed with astonishment and delight by

all of the school children. Hope's spirit always rose in the same ratio as the thermometer fell, and she was half wild with joy when she waked up and found the whole landscape dazzling white with its wintry blanket. There would be no school that day, for the children were too unaccustomed to it to wade through the snow to the school-house, and after breakfast that morning she went out in the yard and engaged in the very dignified business of playing snowball with James, Willie and Robert King. Clad in a garnet dress, trimmed in black, her black hair tied with garnet ribbons, her eyes twinkling with merriment, and the effect of the crisp, wintry air apparent in her glowing cheeks, she was a charming object to look upon, and so thought Robert King, and so thought Rodney Gilbert, who chanced to be passing. He had lately returned from his trip, and lifted his hat as he went by. He was even impolite enough to look back at the two, who were pelting each other with snowballs and laughing as though the world was all gladness. "She is a puzzle," was his reflection : at one time, dignified, almost to sternness, and crying over a pang of conscience which others would scarcely think of ; at another as happy and careless as a bird set free, and romping like a child ; and withal cherishing ambitious dreams ; I don't know what to think of her. But she looks decidedly pretty just now." The result of his meditations, whatever they were, was a visit to Mr. Watkins' that very evening. Hope flushed rosy red when she heard of his arrival. She was busy, however, and did not go into the parlor until her equanimity was restored. She greeted Mr. Gilbert less cordially than he thought necessary, after several weeks absence. She inquired how he enjoyed his trip.

"Pretty well," he replied, "though I am equally well if not better satisfied to be at home again. I wish I could have been in your romp this morning. I do not think I

have seen as happy a crowd since I left, as you all seemed."

"Well, I was happy, for the time; perfectly happy," she replied. "I think the atmosphere has as much to do with one's happiness as anything else."

"Yes, I remember what was said when we parted, about fresh air, exercise, and cheerful company being the best medicines, and I think you have been trying them all in my absence; for I never saw you look so well."

"I am glad to hear you say so," she replied mischievously, "for you know I lacked brightness and color; and there was great room for improvement in my looks."

"Lack brightness and color! Who ever told you that? Did Mr. Young?"

"Did anyone ever say so?" said she, with a merry little laugh; "if so, they were certainly never betrayed by Mr. Young."

"Miss Caldwell, a thousand pardons, but before I knew you well, I said something like that, but I can assure you I have had cause to retract my opinion more than once since, and have long ago regretted my rashly spoken words. But you were represented to me as a being more beautiful than common mortals ever are; and my imagination had invested you with angelic charms. I trust, though, that you will forgive a too free expression of my opinion, when at first you did not seem to reach my ideal."

"I have nothing to forgive, Mr. Gilbert. How can it possibly affect me, whether you think me pretty or otherwise. I do not wish my friends to like me for my looks, even were they attractive enough to gain friends, yet you must own that the manner in which I learned your opinion of my personal appearance, was, to say the least, embarrassing in the extreme."

And in her candid way she gave him a brief account of how she had overheard the conversation between him

and Mr. Young, so disparaging to her charms. "I do not wish him ever to know that I heard what he said," she continued, alluding to the latter gentleman. "I do not care a mite for any criticism on my personal appearance, but to be spoken of as one with whom to carry on a pleasant flirtation ; as one to be taken up and thrown away at pleasure, you must own, is rather hard to bear."

"I should judge so," said Mr. Gilbert.

He was running over in his mind every word of the conversation which Hope had so unfortunately overheard, and could not help feeling annoyed. "What must she think of him, as well as of Mr. Young?" He would have now given much to recall his rashly spoken words. Hope's beauty had grown upon him ; had been revealed more and more every time he saw her, until now he could analyze each perfect feature, and wonder that he was so blind as not to perceive her loveliness upon their first meeting. "I was a fool," thought he, "to have expressed my opinion of her so soon, and if she is like other women she will never forgive my unflattering words."

If she cherished any resentment against him, she had, however, a most charming way of concealing it, for she had never seemed so agreeable to him as on this Winter's evening, nor so beautiful. The firelight shed a ruddy glow over cheek, brow and perfect form ; mirth beamed in the bright eyes and parted the crimson lips, revealing the pearly teeth between ; while the whole face was framed in its wealth of curly black hair, setting it off as a handsome frame does a lovely picture. Her manners, too, seemed to Rodney more graceful and fascinating than he had ever before imagined them. Remembering her as he had first seen, and as he now beheld her, he made two comparisons in regard to the difference in her at those two periods. He thought of a splendid instrument of music, when sitting silent and dead in its place, and of the same instrument

when some master hand awoke its silent chords to almost divine harmony, thrilling the whole soul with rapture. Then he compared her to Pymalion's statue, warmed into life. Perhaps she mentally made some such comparison in regard to him. His dark cheek glowed, his eye sparkled, and his conversation, though at times tinged with bitterness, was extremely interesting. He had travelled a great deal, and had thought and studied deeply, and in conversational power was superior to Daniel Young. In her childish manner Hope asked him questions of the places where he had been, and of books that he had read, of which she was ignorant; and it afforded him pleasure to give her any information which she needed, and which he possessed. Her confession seemed to have broken down the barrier of reserve which had existed between them, and she could now talk to him as to a friend. The hours passed in each other's society fled away so swiftly, on this occasion, that neither could realize how they passed, yet Rodney retired that night with an aching heart.

"It is wrong," he soliloquized, "utterly wrong in me. I must be firm. It will not do. The little witch is very fascinating, yet I must not forget everything for her. No! I will not." He took a picture from his pocket, looked at it earnestly, and thus continued: "Miss Hope is not so pretty as she, not so elegant, hardly as witty, and has not her wonderful voice, yet I must stay out of her society or I will be a miserable man, and might, too, render her unhappy."

Pursuant to this resolution, he stayed away from Mr. Watkins' for several weeks. Hope wondered what made him so whimsical, but she had so much to do as to give her but little time for idle reverie. Then, too, there were many other visitors to divert her mind; and the time fled swiftly away. Christmas holidays were now at hand, to the great joy of teacher and of pupils.

CHAPTER XII.

Christmas day with our heroine was rather a dull one. She gave holiday, of course ; aside from this, and her giving and receiving a few presents, there was little to distinguish the day from any other, with her. With the children Santa Claus made amends for all deficiencies. They were half frantic with delight on beholding the well filled stockings hung by the mantel-piece ; and so well did they appreciate the good things therein, that before night Maud was quite sick, and James and Willie were tired of seeing confectioneries. However, on the next morning, all arose in good health and spirits. Hope was invited to a dinner party at Mr. Stuart's, and Charlie Stuart, the brother of Hattie and Mary, whom she had not seen on her former visit to his father's, came after her. It was there that she met with Mr. Rodney Gilbert, the first time that she had seen him since his visit to Mr. Watkins', on that snowy night, of which we have already spoken. He seemed to her, upon their first meeting on this occasion, extremely unsocial, and he had an abstracted look about him, which did not add to his comeliness. Something seemed to have gone wrong with him. Mr. Young was also at Mr. Stuart's. He seemed in as good spirits as ever, and was apparently as fond of Hope's society.

There were quite a number of guests at Mr. Stuart's on this occasion, many of whom our heroine had never before met. Among these was a Miss Myrtle—Miss Juno Myrtle—a tall, rather graceful looking girl, with bright, black eyes, dark skin, a beautiful suit of glossy black hair, and an air of style about her which rendered her quite attractive. Add to this that she was a bright, witty girl, and

almost a marvel in conversational power, considering her limited chances, and you have as near a description of Miss Juno Myrtle as we can well give. Miss Mary Allison, a cousin of Mr. Nathan Allison, was a young lady rather below than above the medium height of women, with light hair, a fair, ruddy complexion, intelligent blue eyes, a pretty foot, and a very plain, but very neat style of dressing. She was a teacher in a high school—a girl of more than ordinary intellect, and one with a warm, tender heart; yet, who was withal, so full of mirth and fun, and so irresistibly comic in her speech and manner, as to be the life of any crowd she chanced to be in. Just now she was entertaining a coterie of ladies and gentlemen—her witticisms provoking much good humored laughter from those around her. Ada Crawford, a prettily formed, curly haired, brown-eyed little lady, with a childish love of fun, and a cheerful, light-hearted temperament; one who saw “the silver lining to every cloud,” and looked forward with bright hopes to the future, no matter how dark the present might be, was another one introduced to Hope that day. Her dress and general appearance put our heroine in mind of a sparrow, so exquisitely neat and fitting was her apparel; so light and petit her general appearance. Her frank way of speaking Hope admired very much. Whatever might be her foibles deceit was not one of them. Nina Harrington, a young girl of sixteen summers, a rosy-cheeked Hebe—the living impersonation of perfect youth and perfect health—came next in order of introduction. Her blue dress, with white lace at the neck and in the sleeves, set off her fair skin and rosy cheeks; the glossy brown hair was drawn away from the white brow and arranged very plainly, revealing the perfect shape of her head; the small, pretty feet which her misses dress betrayed, looked even smaller in the kid buttoned shoes, and her appearance, taken altogether, was charming.

Rachel Bruce, a young lady of medium height, with a slender, graceful figure, soft, dark skin, pretty teeth, and a magnificent suit of black hair, was a girl whom to know well was to love, so sweet and amiable was her disposition. Her maroon-colored dress, trimmed in brocaded velvet of a darker shade, was extremely becoming to her ; and among her dark locks was carelessly placed a geranium, with its red flowers. Cora Cromartie was a tall, queenly looking woman, with complexion like a blush rose, golden hair, pretty hands, and an air of native grace and freedom about her, reminding one of the movements of a deer. Her cousin, Emma Cromartie, was alike her in complexion and the color of her hair, but much stouter. She was a most lovely young lady.

Such were the youthful members of the female sex assembled at Mr. Stuart's, besides Mary and Hatty, Estelle Moran and Hope. There was, besides these, a goodly sprinkling of married ladies, and some few single ones no longer young. Mrs. Ambler, the mother of Harry, Mrs. Powers, Mrs. Turnnage, Mrs. Hunter and Mrs. Wheeler were all there. The most of these ladies were good looking, intelligent and pleasant. As all had either one or more children attending Hope's school, they of course felt both curiosity and interest in regard to the teacher, whom they had never met before. They seemed to vie with each other as to which one should show her the most respect and attention, and she, in turn, was affable and sociable with all.

"Miss Caldwell," said Mrs. Ambler and Mrs. Turnnage in a breath, "you really deserve credit for advancing your scholars so rapidly, when this is your first attempt, too. I feel proud of my children's progress. We all know, too, how difficult it is to manage them at home, and appreciate your efforts to train them well, very much indeed."

"I declare, Miss Caldwell," remarked Mrs. Powers, "I was both amused and provoked when Mr. Powers told me how old Mrs. Simmons talked to you. I thought to myself, she will think strangely of our neighborhood; but you must remember that at a country school, very often all classes are thrown indiscriminately together. This is the first time Mrs. Simmons ever sent her children to any but a public school. The trustees, in consideration of her poverty and widowhood, agreed to let her boys come for a merely nominal sum, and I suppose she thought, with the jealousy common to some people, that her children might be treated with injustice by the teacher, and so she determined to give her orders beforehand."

"In regard to text-books, Miss Caldwell," remarked Mrs. Turnnage, "I must say for the patrons of the school, that the teachers have been changed so often, and books accordingly, that some of them—particularly the poorer ones—have become completely discouraged, and almost vow, sometimes, that they will never purchase a new book for their children whenever an old one will answer the purpose. Then, too, some of the books are torn up and destroyed by the children, so that it is a difficult matter to muster up books enough, of the same kind, to properly classify your pupils."

"I have them all classified now," replied Hope. "The majority of my patrons were quite willing to buy the necessary books, and those who were not I furnished myself, so that now I have no trouble."

"You don't mean to say you bought the books and gave them away."

"Certainly," she replied, "this is far better than to work under the disadvantages I would have done without."

"Well," said Mrs. Hunter, who had not yet spoken, "that beats all! I would not have done it."

"Miss Caldwell," remarked Mrs. Ambler, "I was highly amused at Harry, when he told me of the little incidents in regard to the pencils. Poor, little fellow ; it seems that his pencils slip away from him. You must have your patience sorely tried sometimes."

"I do," replied the teacher, frankly, "but I looked for that in the beginning, and so am better prepared for it."

"I think," said Mrs. Turnnage, "that you were intended for a teacher."

Hope smiled a little bitterly.

"One can make anything that is in human power a success, by simply devoting every energy of the soul to it," she answered. "I never dreamed of being a teacher a year ago, so there was surely no natural bent of my mind toward that profession. Yet, now that I have entered upon it, I think scarcely any calling nobler or grander."

As she spoke, enthusiasm, which was a part of her very nature, gave a richer glow to the velvet cheek, a brighter light to the dark eyes.

"What a lovely girl Miss Caldwell is," they all remarked, as she went to another part of the apartment. I doubt very much whether she well bury herself in a country school house long, when she is so well fitted to shine in society."

"What a beautiful diamond breast-pin," remarked Mrs. Powers, "and that black dress fits her to perfection."

If such were the remarks made by those of her own sex, one could not wonder that Hope was admired by the gentlemen of the crowd. Besides those whom we have already introduced to the reader, all of whom, except Herbert Ransom, were present, she was to-day formally introduced to quite a number, some of whom we will describe.

Egbert Lyons was a bachelor, over fifty years old, yet still handsome, whose intelligence, suavity, ease of manner

and extreme politeness would ever give him a passport in the best society, independent of fortune. He seemed, though a great ladies' man, proof against female attraction any farther than mere admiration went. Perhaps his heart was buried in some love of the past. Be this as it may, no one ever thought of his falling in love. It was too absurd a thing to be dreamed of. A young teacher named William Melvin, a slender, keen-eyed, reasonably good looking young man, compared notes with Hope on teaching, to her intense amusement. He was intelligent and good humored, and she imbibed some new ideas from him.

"Well," said he, after she had related, though guardedly, some little incidents connected with her life at school, "I can't blame the patrons of a school so much, because so often they have such shabby teachers. I have sometimes taught a public school, and know a great many public school teachers, and not one in ten is qualified for the profession. So that they teach the requisite number of days and draw their money out of the treasury, they are content. I have known it to be the case where thirty-five, or even as high as forty pupils went to one teacher, in an uncomfortable school house, running the greatest risk in regard to their health, with no uniform text books, with no black board, with no advantages whatever, and the parents thought it all right, because the little ones were going to school free. Doubtless many a little grave, now sodded over, might have never been but for cold caught at such institutions of learning as these. Sometimes it is a matter of utter impossibility for the instructor to hear more than one or two recitations a day from some of the scholars, on account of having so large a number so imperfectly classed. I can assure you, Miss Caldwell, that a great reformation is needed both in teachers and in school houses, more particularly in the country; and proud as I am of my native State, which in point of natural advantages, I

believe, is exceeded by no other in the Union, never will North Carolina attain to the lofty eminence which is rightly hers, until her people awake to a just appreciation of the advantages of education. Such, at least, are my sentiments."

"I agree with you," replied his listener. "I was utterly surprised at the amount of ignorance which exists among some classes of our society, judging from some of my pupils."

After this, conversation turned on other topics, and Hope enjoyed the morning very much.

One of her new acquaintances was a young gentleman called Jonathan Hull, a tall, large man with big blue eyes, fair skin and black hair, who was of an exceedingly lively turn, and seemed rather a favorite with the girls. He, too, had a chat with her, and the hours sped by so swiftly among all her acquaintances, that dinner was announced ere she had a thought of such a thing. It was Mr. Jonathan Hull who escorted her into the dining room, and her seat at the table chanced to be between his and Mr. Rodney Gilbert's. Mr. Gilbert had spoken to her during the morning, but had had small chance to converse with her ; and now that he was so near her, he was so engrossed in conversation with Miss Mary Allison as to have no opportunity to speak to Hope ; the more particularly as Mr. Hull was chatting away to her in such a lively manner that she was compelled to give him her whole attention. She could scarcely have told why herself ; but notwithstanding the presence of such a merry, laughing crowd, a cold chill crept around her heart. No one would have dreamed of such a thing, who looked at her, but for a few moments she was thoroughly miserable. After dinner she started out on the long piazza for a drink of water, when, to her great surprise, she espied Mr. Gilbert, seated on one of the long benches there. He was alone—looking "gloomy enough,"

she thought. She gave a slight start of surprise as she saw him, but went on to the water shelf. As she turned to go back into the house, she spoke to him:

"Sitting out here alone, Mr. Gilbert, when such a pleasant crowd is gathered in the parlor? I am surprised at you!"

"I am always alone," he replied, "too miserable even to be polite"; and there was a something reckless, despairing, in his tones which caused Hope's tender heart to pity him, and awakened in her a vain yearning to soothe his sorrow, from whatever source it sprang. She came a little nearer to him ere she spoke:

"You are not like yourself, Mr. Gilbert; has anything happened to cause you sadness?"

"Nothing, Miss Hope," he replied, "or, at least, nothing for which I am not to blame myself. Sit down here and talk with me a little, we shall not be missed from that giddy crowd in the parlor, and your talk may do me good."

She took the proffered seat, saying as she did so, "Isn't this glorious weather for December? I almost look to see violets springing up under my feet."

"You remind me of Tennyson, when he makes his hero say of Maud:

" ' From the meadow your walks have left so sweet,
That whenever a March wind sighs;
He sets the jewel print of your feet,
In violets blue as your eyes.'

Only your eyes are dark instead of blue."

"What a pity I am not a blonde," she exclaimed, "so that those verses might apply to me. Ah! fair skinned, blue-eyed girls have so much the advantage. Angels and beauties are so generally represented with fair skin and golden tresses."

"I have a picture," said he, "which I will show you sometime, of one as fair as poet or painter ever delineated."

"I used to know a girl of that description," remarked Hope, a slight shade crossing her face as she spoke.

"And was she not as good as she was beautiful?" inquired Rodney.

"Yes, if you think Cleopatra or Delilah good, she was," replied Hope, with more bitterness in her tones than he had ever noticed before, "for I think she was their exact counterpart."

"I am sorry it is so," he remarked, carelessly, "for I had hitherto imagined all fair skinned ladies almost perfection, and thought that only brunettes like myself had a spice of the evil one in them."

She could scarcely tell by his tones whether he spoke ironically or not, but made no reply.

"Do you know," said she, changing the subject rather abruptly, "that in weather like this I sometimes feel perfectly happy, and could sit and dream my life away, if stern duties did not await me."

"Dream of what, or whom?" he inquired.

A vivid blush mounted to her cheek; for of late she was conscious that there was one whose image would intrude upon her musings. She felt relieved when he continued, without waiting for a reply or seeming to notice her crimson cheeks.

"Dame rumor has already given you a central figure round which your meditations may revolve, in the person of my friend, Mr. Young."

"Mr. Young!" she exclaimed in unfeigned surprise.

"Can it be possible that people are so foolish?"

"I see nothing very foolish in that," he remarked drily.

"Perhaps you and others may not, but if he and myself deem it an absurd idea, I don't see why others should not look on it in the same light."

"And you are nothing to each other, then?" he inquired, his eager tones betraying the deep interest he felt in her answer.

This, and the expression in his dark eyes caused Hope's heart to beat faster, and her cheeks to burn. There was a yearning tenderness in his look, which told her that Rodney cherished a more than ordinary attachment for her; but she said, stifling down the heart throbs as she spoke:

"We are nothing to each other, Mr. Gilbert, but friends, and hardly very good friends now."

"I am sorry that you are not good friends, but am glad that you are not betrothed, for I love ——"

He stopped suddenly, for at this crisis Hattie Stuart and Mr. Young came out on the piazza, and directly in front of the bench where they were sitting.

"Found at last!" exclaimed Hattie, her merry laugh belying the bitterness of her spirit as she noticed the ill concealed embarrassment of the two, "we could not imagine what had become of you."

"Well," said Rodney, recovering his composure, "I came here for a little fresh air and sunshine, and Miss Hope for some water; and I determined not to let the opportunity of having a pleasant tete-a-tete pass unimproved. I move that we all four stay out here awhile, for I dislike the house in this weather."

Somehow there was now a change of programme. Hattie playfully took a seat on the bench beside Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Young beside Hope, and soon a stranger would have been utterly deceived in regard to these two couples. Whether from a wish to be revenged on Mr. Young, for his highly spoken words, by coquetting with him, or from a desire,

to make Rodney jealous, or from a real change in her sentiments toward Mr. Young, Hope certainly appeared well pleased in his company. After a little while they left the piazza and went out into the flower garden together. Rodney's stealthy glance in that direction was not unnoticed by Hattie.

"Miss Hope and Mr. Young are certainly betrothed," she remarked. "Mr. Gilbert, you should not have let him get ahead of you in the race. It will be hard work making up for lost time."

"Yes," he replied, with a forced laugh, "but dilatory people always fall behind in the race."

"She is certainly pretty," said Hattie, "but perhaps there are others equally so."

"If looks were all ——" Rodney began, then checking himself, abruptly changed the subject.

Once more that evening he had a chance to chat with Hope for a brief while, but somehow the words he wished to utter were crushed back, and he left her society a wretched, almost despairing man. The winter day, so fraught with social pleasure to the rest of the pleasant party at Mr. Stuart's, was not enjoyed by him. As for our heroine, for the first time in her life she acknowledged to herself that Rodney Gilbert had a share in her affections ; that, morose and gloomy as he was at times, there was still a subtle charm about him which caused her to regard him with feelings of tenderness, which, under all the circumstances, she was ashamed of. "Why did she care for him?" Again and again did that question occur to her, but was destined to be unanswered. Herbert Ransom seemed a far better man, Daniel Young a much more pleasant one ; yet, in spite of all, her heart went straying after Rodney with strange, inexplicable interest. Perhaps it was partly sympathy for his griefs, from whatever source they sprang. And yet he had never declared himself;

had never betrayed his feelings for her, save in his peculiar manner at times, and for some time had not even called on her. She hated herself for being unwomanly and foolish, and for lacking in self respect; but all this did not drive the unbidden guest, love, from her heart.

The merry, talking, laughing party at Mr. Stuart's seemed to enjoy themselves immensely. Late in the evening, when the crowd made a move to depart, the Misses Stuart insisted on the single portion of it remaining, if the married ones were compelled to leave.

"We are just in the humor for enjoyment now. Stay to-night and we will dance."

This proposition was hailed with pleasure by the juvenile portion of the pleasant party, to whom the winter day had flown away too swiftly. So there was a little dance that night, which gave general satisfaction to all. Though Hope declined joining with the votaries of Terpsichore, she enjoyed the festive scene very much. Miss Juno Myrtle and Miss Mary Allison, with Miss Estelle Moran and the Misses Stuart, were constantly on the floor. Emma Cromartie, too, "tripped the light fantastic." The Messrs. Stuart, Mr. Daniel Young, Mr. William Melvin, and at rare intervals, Mr. Gilbirt, all danced. Hope was not lonely, however. Mr. Stuart, the father of her young friends, sat by her, and conversed a part of the time, and also Mr. Egbert Lyon, who proved himself very entertaining. Mrs. Stuart, too, chatted with her for some time; and though Hope did not enjoy the festal scene so well as her young companions, yet she felt well pleased, and in spite of the hidden pain at her heart, contrived to be merry and sociable.

During the Christmas holidays she was invited to join several "surprise parties," and at every one she met with nearly the same crowd whom she had seen at Mr. Stuart's, augmented by a dozen or so other young people.

Mr. Gilbert was at all of these, and several times seemed on the point of declaring himself to her, but something changed the tide of conversation every time. She really felt relieved when Christmas was over, and she back in the school again. Work was a help to her excited feelings—an opiate to the pain at her heart. She wondered at Rodney's strange conduct. Something whispered to her that he loved her, and yet, what reason could there be for his peculiar manner toward her; for his melancholy and abstraction? She could not fathom the mystery, but it annoyed her greatly.

One lovely Sabbath evening, about six weeks after Christmas, (Rodney had not called on her in that time), Herbert Ransom was spending the evening at Mr. Watkins', after preaching at the little church in the morning. He and Hope were alone for awhile, and in their conversation he spoke of his old schoolmate.

"I cannot imagine what has come over Rodney of late. He has been for years somewhat of a recluse, but for the last few weeks, just, too, as I was hoping for better things of him, he is even more gloomy than ever. I can think of but one clew to the mystery. Miss Hope, I trust you will not deem me impertinent, but if you have aught to do with his melancholy, in all seriousness, I beg of you to think of him kindly, and if he ever offers you his hand consider well before you reject it. Believe me, he is a better man than people think; is honorable and high minded, and did he not have too exalted ideas of perfection—which not realizing he has become somewhat soured—he would have no superior among my acquaintances."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Ransom. Mr. Gilbert's melancholy is not attributable to me. He has never addressed me. Indeed, he has not been here for weeks."

Some girls Herbert Ransom might have doubted, had they made this statement, under the circumstances; but

he had implicit faith in Hope's truth. She was not one of those girls who deem that falsehood is necessary or justifiable in love affairs any more than in the common, every day business of life.

"If so, and I do not doubt it, Miss Caldwell, I am at an utter loss to divine the cause of his sadness. Here is a paper containing a piece of poetry which he wrote."

He handed it to Hope, who with strange emotion read the following lines :

"TOO LATE."

"There are words of hope, the funeral knell.

The seal of an awful fate;
Heaven shut out by an endless hell,
Are in these words, "too late."

The cloth is spread, the red wine poured,
Music breathes its sweetest spell,
The guests are there in bright array,
As gay as a marriage bell.

And by and by, at the midnight hour,
A knock is heard at the gate ;
But the haggard guest only hears the words:
"Stand without, you are "too late."
And the warmth, and light, and social cheer,
The red wine's sparkling foam,
The music and mirth are not for him ;
And he wearily gets him home.

I have seen a boy, wayward and wild,
Heeding not his father's word ;
But going on in his own sad way,
As though he had never heard ;
Pausing not to think, in his mad career
Of sin, and shame, and crime,
Of the furrows upon his parents' brow,
And white locks before their time ;

Until to his awakened sense,
The awful tidings came:
Your father will hear your voice no more ;
No more will speak your name.

And when too late, alas ! to fill
His sire's heart with joy ;
I have seen grief come like a mighty flood,
On the late repentant boy.

But turning too late the spirit to cheer,
Of a parent good and kind,
Through all his life will rest a cloud,
On the boy's remorseful mind.
Through the long weeks of the Summer time,
The earth is athirst for rain ;
The heavens are brass, the ground like rock,
The fields have been tilled in vain.

The streams are dry, the gasping fish
Are left on the land to die ;
All things are parched by the blazing sun,
Shining from a cloudless sky.
But when too late to revive the fields,
Or fill the shrunk ears with grain,
In copious showers, o'er hill and dale,
Descends the wished-for rain.

Poets landed almost to the very heaven,
While cold in death they lie ;
Though denied in life a loaf of bread,
And penniless left to die.
Costly tombs o'er those whose whole life long
Was one of toil and pain ;
All these but prove, that coming too late,
Good gifts may come in vain.

But to feel that the love which would have made
The dim, drear earth a heaven,
Is freely ours, but coming too late,
In mockery seems given.
To feel that honor binds us fast,
In chains as hard as steel,
And links our fate with one for whom
We no affection feel.

While madly strays the heart away
Toward its rightful mate ;
This is indeed to feel the power
Of these short words, "too late."

“What could Rodney mean by the last verse?” She was as much puzzled in regard to it, as Mr. Ransom had been in regard to his conduct of late. Of course her thoughts often wandered, during the ensuing week, to the one whom she could not help considering her evil genius. On Sunday he came to Mr. Watkins’. Late in the evening he with the young teacher and the two boys, James and Willie, walked to a stream about half a mile from the house, which was noted for its beauty. The evening was glorious. There was a misty blueness in the atmosphere, through which the sun fell in golden rays. The woods with their numerous pines, bays and evergreen thickets, did not look desolate; and the water with the reflected form of shrub and tree in its clear depths, bore an aspect of repose entirely in keeping with the sacredness of the Sabbath evening. Rodney was talkative and pleasant, but Hope noticed a sad look about his eye—an expression as of one who has fought and conquered, but whose victory has been dearly gained. Never had she so longed to know the secret of his life—the hidden canker which was eating his heart away; never had she felt such a yearning wish to console him. They walked on, talking quietly until they reached a rustic bridge across the little stream; there they paused. James and Willie were at a considerable distance from them, gathering acorn caps and other woodland treasures. Hope looked at the water silently, ever and anon casting a pebble or stick in it, and watching it as it floated off.

“You are nothing but a child after all, Miss Hope. How came you to have such a strange mixture of qualities in your disposition?” remarked Rodney, with a tender smile; “I never saw anyone like you. I do not know what to think of you.”

“Then do not think at all,” said she, lightly.

"That is impossible," he replied ; then with a sudden burst of emotion, "Oh, Hope! Hope! Would to heaven I had never seen you!"

She was startled at this unexpected avowal. Her face flushed, then turned pale, but recovering herself-possession she said :

"Mr. Gilbert, why should you speak in this manner? What have I done that you should make such a wish?"

"What have you done? Nothing, except to open my eyes to the fact that a man may lose a lifetime happiness just by being a little too hasty."

"You speak in riddles, Mr. Gilbert," with a touch of hauteur in her tones, "I do not at all understand you."

"I will explain myself more fully then," he replied. "I do not know, Miss Hope, whether you have ever deemed that I cherished aught beside friendly feelings for you ; probably never gave the matter a thought ; still I think some explanations are due you."

"Due me?" she inquired wonderingly ; then changing her tone she continued, "I wish you would give me your confidence ; would tell me what hidden grief is preying upon you. I am your friend and can sympathize with your sorrows, even if out of my power to console you."

"At least you can pray for me," he rejoined. "I have confidence in your prayers, and Herbert Ransom's, and in those of no one else."

"That I do already," was her reply, hastily adding the words, "as I do for all of my friends."

"For all of your friends! Am I then just classed among your list of friends?"

"Certainly, you would not have me consider you an enemy, would you?"

"No, but I do not cherish friendly feelings for you. I love you madly, yet I hardly have the right to tell you so,

for I was engaged to be married when I first saw you, and am now."

At this most unlooked-for declaration, Hope turned deadly pale; but she betrayed her feelings in no other way. Rodney continued:

"This, Miss Hope, is the canker worm that is eating up my very heart. You cannot realize what a conflict I have undergone since I last saw you. To love one woman, as wildly and devotedly as I do you, and yet be bound in honor to another, whose happiness might be completely sacrificed by my falsity; this is my fate. Believe me, nothing would have caused me to reveal this but the thought that you might think strangely of me; might deem me ungentlemanly; for your woman's intuition must have told you that several times I was on the eve of declaring my love for you, but that something ever hindered me from doing so."

"Why then, Mr. Gilbert," she inquired, her voice trembling a little in spite of her efforts to steady it, "did you ever seek my society?"

"Because, I did not realize my danger. At first sight you know I deemed you neither pretty or interesting; and though I became more and more interested in you at every subsequent meeting, I never dreamed of any serious impression being made upon my heart, until that snowy evening when I came to see you. I paid you attention merely because you were a stranger in the neighborhood, and I thought it due you. But after that night I opened my eyes to the truth. I saw myself drifting away from truth, from honor, and from my betrothed; and yet, so strong was the love I bore you, that when thrown in your society, several times I was on the point of flinging every other scruple to the winds, and of asking you to become my wife, without informing you of my engagement to

another woman. But, bad as I am, I have a horror of falsehood, and I wish you to know all the truth."

"Mr. Gilbert, of what use is this conversation ; what do you purpose by telling me that you love me, but are betrothed to some one else ? I think you are wronging yourself and wronging your betrothed, and I see nothing to be gained by the avowal."

"Nothing, Hope, except that I do not wish you to look upon me as a deliberate villain. I wish you to think at least kindly of me in the long years of the future."

"That I might do without your telling me so much."

"Then you do not care for me ; your heart is utterly untouched ? I ought to rejoice at the thought, and yet so intensely selfish is my love that I should rather you would be unhappy than not to care for me."

"This is most unkind ! ungenerous !" exclaimed Hope, with crimson cheeks and trembling voice ; "I did not deem you, Mr. Gilbert, possessed of such contemptible vanity."

"Vanity ! Oh ! my love, could you look into my heart you would never accuse me so unjustly ! Believe me, I am honorable. I will be all that my betrothed can expect if we marry, but my heart does not thrill to the sound of her voice as it does to yours ; her little hand is so lovely that it hardly seems human ; yet it has not the power to fill me with joy by a chance touch as does yours, and I can spend whole days contentedly away from her, while it costs me the bitterest self-denial to absent myself from you. Oh ! cruel fate that I met with you 'too late,' too late, at least, to strive to gain your heart !"

"Moved, in spite of herself, to intense pity for the strong man, whose noble frame was shaken by deep emotion, she spoke, but her voice and look were more that of some holy nun than of a loving, sorrowing woman. Raising her hand toward the deep blue sky, she repeated, in solemn tones,

the words of the inspired Apostle: "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth;" for "here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." "Who knows but what seems so dark to you now may seem very bright hereafter; who knows but what if you had been free you might have thought infinitely more of me than of the Creator?"

"True," he replied, "and yet it seems to me that if you were mine I should be a thousand times more religious—a thousand times more grateful to God for his mercies."

She did not tell him so, but she felt that all through the coming years it would be a consolation for her to know that Rodney had loved her, and would have made her his wife had not honor forbade. But a strange fate had drifted them utterly apart; she was powerless to console him, for she had as high a sense of honor as he, and would wrong no woman living if she knew it. There was but one course to take. This must be their last meeting. It was a bitter hour to both. The evening sun was setting gloriously; the scene had lost none of its peacefulness; yet a storm of grief was raging in the hearts of these two. Rodney, in spite of Hope's attempt to be cold and dignified, had guessed but too truly that his love was returned in all its full intensity, and it seemed worse than death that just as they knew of their mutual affection they would have to separate. Oh! that God willed that they might die together! I would rather die with Rodney than live without him, was Hope's unspoken thought, as it was his in regard to her. But her decision was made. She would do nothing to tempt him from truth and honor. She would not swerve from the right. Love might never more brighten her path, the "rough and flinty way" must be for her, "the primrose path" for others, but her resolve was the same. Woman-like, she had a curiosity to see the portrait of her rival and expressed her wish to Rodney. It was a

small picture, elegantly framed, which he took from his pocket, and the face it portrayed was as lovely as an angel's dream ; but who can describe her amazement, her horror, when in the portrait she beheld the features of her false friend—the one who had robbed her young life of its brightness—Amelia Montcalm ! Yes, there was Amelia's portrait ; her fair, exquisite face and her halo of golden hair ; how strange it seemed that Rodney did not love her perfectly, when her charms had wiled away Robert St. George's heart from his betrothed ! Hope's face turned deadly pale as she glanced at it, so pale, indeed, that Mr. Gilbert feared she would faint, but she was too strong for that.

"For pity's sake, Hope," he exclaimed, "what is the matter ; you are not like yourself ?"

"No, I am not myself ; but it is useless to speak of it ; let us return home."

"I may not see you again for a long time, possibly never, and yet you hasten the moment of parting ! Can you not give me the few brief moments that we might be together ? I expect to carry the memory of this hour all through my future life, and sometimes in the twilight, when the quiet and stillness woos to sweet musings, I will think of every word and look of yours, and more particularly of everything connected with this, the saddest of all partings. Oh ! my precious love ! I am selfish and mean ; even in my devotion to you ! Would to Heaven I had acted more wisely !"

"You have done no one any intentional wrong, Mr. Gilbert, and unintentional wrongs can be forgiven ; but it will be dishonorable in you now not to banish all thought of every one but the girl who has plighted her troth to you. You must live for her."

"No !" was his reply ; "ambition shall be my idol now. My heart is like a heap of dust. I deemed myself miserable before, but I am trebly wretched now !"

She felt intuitively that he would be still more unhappy when united to a woman whom he did not perfectly love. But she strove to repress all such thoughts, and absolutely longed for the moment of his departure to come. It was agony to be with him, and yet feel that an impassable barrier was between them. Better that a thousand miles intervened. The reader may well believe that it was no small temptation to Hope to use every art of which she was mistress to induce Rodney to break his troth with Amelia. Every feeling of love and of revenge would have been fully gratified by his desertion of his betrothed for her sake. But so noble and conscientious was she that she would not contemplate such an act for one moment. She dashed the cup of possible joy and triumph resolutely from her lips, and in its stead drained one of wormwood, but she felt that she was doing right, and this thought supported her. Rodney seemed to share in her feelings in regard to their being separate, for upon his return to Mr. Watkins' he ordered his horse, and notwithstanding the entreaties of the family for him to spend the night with them, rode off into the gathering darkness. Hope was glad of the shelter of the night, screening her even from the eyes of friends, for she longed to give vent to feelings but too hardly repressed, and her pillow that night was moistened by a torrent of bitter tears.

CHAPTER XIII.

The neighborhood in which Hope taught was emphatically a farming one. A grove of noble trees surrounded the school-house, but the highway was immediately in front of, and at no great distance from it, and back of it, and on each side, lay wide fields which every year bore

abundant crops of corn and some cotton. Now, in the early spring days, when not busy with the children, she would watch the ploughmen, as all day long they followed their patient team, and wonder to herself if they did not grow very weary of their task. Then, when they planted the grain, it seemed to her that it must require faith to believe that the buried seed would ever come to earth again, even though the same miracle was witnessed every year. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption." These words of the inspired Apostle haunted her, and turning to her own work she would marvel if the seed sown by her with such patient toil, would ever spring into immortal life. For Hope regarded the mere imparting of knowledge to pupils as but a small part of a teacher's duty. The heart—the spiritual nature—she regarded as of even more importance than the intellect, and small indeed would have been her satisfaction to know that she was training her scholars but to make them more accomplished in wickedness, but to render them more capable of carrying out plans to mislead or injure others. Shortly after her last interview with Rodney, a description of which we have already given, she took up the idea of having a kind of Commencement—a "school breaking," as it is called in the country. She had a programme of it already laid out in her own mind, and intended to prepare the children for it pretty soon. One evening, when she was busy hearing a recitation, she saw a train of people passing along the road before the school-house. It was a funeral procession. There was a rough cart, with a small coffin in it, followed by several buggies, some of them rather the worse for wear. The foremost ones contained the mourners. The teacher asked no questions, but her curiosity was strongly excited in regard to it. She felt anxious to know what family had been recently deprived of one of its members. In about an hour the crowd returned, and to her surprise

three of the buggies stopped before the school-house. The children were all agog with excitement at the unwonted spectacle. Helen Hartwell held up her hand.

"What is it, Helen?" inquired the teacher.

"Yonders Ma and a whole crowd of folks comin' to the school-house. They've all got out of the buggies."

Hope recognized the "Widder Simmons," and invited her and the rest of the party in and gave them seats. They each and all, with the exception of the "Widder," introduced themselves to her upon their entrance. That old lady grasped her hand warmly as she bade her good evening. The other members of the party were respectively Mr. Liggins, Aunt Rachel Tyler, Mr. Fogyman, Mrs. Hartwell and Mr. Twining.

Hope went on with the recitation, but it must be confessed with a shade of embarrassment on her countenance. Not being accustomed to frequent visitors, she felt a little discomposed at the unexpected arrival of these. But she struggled against this feeling. Her manner of teaching surprised and interested them. Though falling far short of the mode of instruction now-a-days, it was superior to that of the average country teacher a few years back. When the recitations were over she drew a house on the blackboard. Then she required her pupils to tell her the name of each separate part of a house and the use of each part, as also the materials of which it is composed. She then said :

"To-morrow we will continue this lesson. We will find out all about it, from the foundation-stone until it stands up among the trees, with its chimneys, windows and doors. In this simple manner she interested the children. They were first attracted by her drawings, then her questions roused their curiosity, and besides she had a talent of throwing a human interest around everything. Her object lessons were indelibly stamped upon the memories of her pupils.

The company remained until after school was dismissed. When the children had all filed out, and were making the woods ring with their shouts of gladness, they lingered still, seemingly loth to part with Hope, who, for her own part, was anxious to return home. Mr. Liggins, a coarse, red-faced, red-haired man, whose nose betokened a too free use of the bottle, and whose whole face was the living impersonation of sensuality, unmodified by refined training, seemed to feel that he was called upon to say something to the teacher :

"I likes your teachin', Miss Hope, in most respects. I likes it very well but for one thing. You ain't tight enough. Boys like mine," waving his hand in a sensational manner towards the unfortunate Sam and Joe, "boys like mine need the hickory two or three times a week to season them. They can't get along without it. Every time mine comes home sez I to them, 'who got a whippin' to-day?' and the answer always comes, 'Nobody.' I don't see how you can get along without it."

"Yes," said Mr. Fogymen, "in my time it was no common thing for the teacher to whip eight or ten at a time, and sometimes one boy got five or six whippin's a day."

Though feeling it almost beneath her dignity to say anything at all to these gentlemen, yet, fearing that her silence might be construed into insult, Hope said "that she did not disapprove of corporal punishment when really necessary, but so far had managed to get on very well without it." Her dignity, as well as the use of several words whose meaning they could not fathom, awed both the fault-finders into silence. Aunt Rachel Tyler next spoke :

"I wish, Miss Hope, you would make the children bring their copies home every Friday. They get stolen sometimes here when left Saturday and Sunday. When I went to school paper was paper ; children was keeful with every-

thing, but now-a-days things is wasted. I tells Euphemia, Octavia and Adolphus that when they comes to work as hard as I do for everything they will be more particular. Pencils, too! I can't keep them in pencils to save my life. I do not mean to complain, but you know it is aggravatin'."

Miss Rachel Tyler was a maiden aunt of the three Tyler children, and was a really hard-working, persevering, worthy woman, who had worked for and taken care of the the three as though they were her own. She was a large, but bony woman, every line of whose face and figure betokened energy, decision, as also hard usage. Way back in the sunny days of her girlhood Miss Rachel had been a lover, but the years had come and the years had gone, and still she led a single life, though it must be confessed a very useful one. Heaven only knows what Euphemia, Adolphus and Octavia would have done without her. It ought to be forgiven her if she imagined everything in the past better than the present, for was not the past inseparably connected with her girlhood and with the one love of her life? Had Hope known this she would have had more charity for what she deemed fault-finding. It is well for teachers to be acquainted with patrons, as well as scholars, as they cannot always make due allowance without. As it was, Hope passed the matter over the best she could, telling Miss Rachel "that she used every means in her power to make the children careful, for she was as anxious as anyone for them all to keep good order, and not to waste."

Mrs. Hartwell, a stout, florid lady of some forty years, next had her say :

"Helen tells me, Miss Caldwell, that you keep her in sometimes of evenings. Please let her come home of evenings. I wants her to milk the cows."

What could Hope answer to this? Of what avail were her efforts to advance the children when she met with such constant interference?

Old Mrs. Simmons had nothing to say except in praise of the teacher :

"George and Asa is gettin' along so well I only wish they could go to school to you till they's grown. The other day Tom he had a nice yam potato—a tremendous one—and was crammin' it away in his trunk, and sez I, 'Tom, what is that for?' Sez he, 'I'm a savin' of it for my dear teacher.' "

"Yes," laughed Hope, "and I certainly enjoyed it. I am glad to have my scholars love me."

"Johnnie never gets tired of talkin' about you, Miss Hope," said Mr. Twining, "and he's larnin' right along, too."

Mr. Twining was not destitute of good feeling, though poor and ignorant, and the words of praise fell sweetly on the ears of the young teacher, after being found fault of. She felt that after all teaching was not an utterly thankless task. And it pleased her even more to be loved by the poorest and most ignorant children than by the highest. It proved conclusively that at least she was not partial to the latter, as so many teachers are accused of being.

"You must excuse us for comin' all in a crowd like," said Aunt Rachel Tyler, as they were about to leave the school-house; "only you see we was comin' from the burial, and thought we would stop a little while, and I wanted to see you 'bout the children's copy-books and pencils."

"I am glad you came, and hope you will all call again," said the teacher; "but whose funeral is it that you are attending?"

"It's a little child that got burnt to death; poor Mrs. Beckwith's youngest child. Its mother was washin' and it was standin' around the pot. Its clothes got afire and before they could put it out it got so badly burnt that it died."

"Poor little creature!" exclaimed Hope, "and poor mother! it is dreadful!"

"Yes," responded Aunt Rachel, "but it is better off."

"It is better off!" Simple words, uttered by untutored lips, but with a world of meaning in them and brimming full of immortal hope. Somehow our heroine was suddenly attracted by this strange old maid.

"I'll venture to say that she has a good heart," was Hope's thought, "and if in trouble of such a nature as I could impart to anyone, I would go to her."

"You must come to see us, Miss Hope; we will be glad to see you," was the invitation she received on all sides.

"I wonder why it is that I have so many friends," thought Hope, on her homeward route. "They are good to have, yet, lacking the love I crave, the world seems a desert to me. Oh, Rodney! had you not crossed my path I would now be happy! But I will not mope nor give way to gloom and despondency." And she strove not to. She dressed with as much care, worked as faithfully and tried to be as cheerful as though the star of her life had not faded from her sky. She was strong and brave, yet at times her wish to see Rodney rendered life almost insupportable. But as far as possible she crushed down all such thoughts and feelings and filled up every hour with work. "My life may be saddened, but it shall not be wrecked by disappointed love," was her reflection. God has been too good to me for me to fling away all of His blessings merely because He has not given me all I wish for;" and we trust that all of our readers, young or old, sentimental or practical, will be prepared to say amen to this pious resolve, as also to do likewise, if placed under similar circumstances.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mrs. Watkins, though by no means an inquisitive or prying lady, was not entirely destitute of curiosity, and it may well be supposed that it was strongly excited by the conduct of Rodney and Hope. His evident melancholy and sudden departure from her house on that eventful Sabbath evening, his prolonged absence since, and the abstraction of her manner at times, all convinced the lady that there was some mystery about the matter, but what it was she could not tell. She was no stranger to the lore of affection, and had watched these two closely enough to believe that they were lovers, and their strange parting puzzled her. Could it be possible that Hope had discarded him ? She did not believe it, neither did she see any room for a lover's quarrel ; but perhaps, after all, the girl loved some one else better ; it might be Herbert Ransom, the two were together so much and seemed so well suited in every respect. Thus did the good little lady debate to herself, but came to no definite conclusion. It must be borne in mind by the reader that Mr. Gilbert's engagement had, at Amelia's request, been kept a profound secret ; though it must be confessed not at all contrary to Rodney's desire. She was unwilling as yet to resign her belledom, though she could scarcely hope to captivate a more eligible suitor than her betrothed, and he was too thoroughly indifferent about the matter to care. Not even to Hope had he told every particular in regard to his engagement to Amelia. Had he betrayed the whole truth it would have revealed a deliberate scheme to inveigle him into matrimony. Amelia, while in the little town near him the summer before, had heard a glowing description of his wealth, and on a chance

visit to his mother's had satisfied herself that the report was true. She was then betrothed to another gentleman (she had discarded Robert St. George and a dozen others long ago), but this was a small obstacle in her path. With a cunning of which she was the perfect mistress, she managed to completely win the heart of Rodney's mother before attempting his capture.

"You will never find so good a girl, my son," said Mrs. Gilbert to him; "no one is so sweet and kind to me; then she is rich, stylish and as beautiful as an angel."

There was no denying her beauty. In all his travels he had never beheld a fairer being, and she sang as sweetly as a nightingale. Then, too, she was witty, perfectly self-possessed in manner, and could be as fascinating as a siren when she willed it. Rodney's mother was anxious for him to marry, and more especially if he could marry such a girl as Amelia. She had withheld her consent to his marriage in his early life to a girl whom he fondly loved, and since then he had grown moody, restless, wandering and wretched. She fondly imagined that wedlock would change his temper, and as Amelia was entirely to her liking she endeavored by every means in her power to induce him to address her. Yielding to her persuasions and to the siren charms of a beautiful girl, in an evil hour he offered his hand to Miss Montcalm, which, with affected shyness, but with real exultation, she accepted, giving no thought to her betrothed, thus cruelly betrayed by her treachery. Rodney dreamed not that he would ever love again like he had in the spring-tide of his life; he thought, too, that his mother was correct in her views in regard to his marriage; he admired Amelia's beauty and saw that she was anxious to win his regard, and so had looked forward to his marriage with her in exactly one year from their betrothal, if not with joy, at least without regret.

But his acquaintance with Hope had revealed to him the fact that a second love may be fully as deep, if not deeper than the first. On his introduction to her he had neither admired her face nor her manners, but in every subsequent meeting he found himself strongly attracted by her. The very singularity of her disposition had for him a powerful charm. The strange mixture of child and woman, the determined, conscientious nature, linked with the playfulness of extreme youth, the truth and frankness of her disposition, her talent and independence, and this admirable union of qualities, set off by a face and form which, if not perfectly beautiful, were certainly far above the average woman, had completely enthralled Rodney. He felt at times that he had always known and loved Hope, she seemed so thoroughly a part of his existence. A hundred times did he resolve to break his engagement with Amelia, and a hundred times did a high sense of honor impel him to act differently. He grew wretched—more miserable than he had ever been before. His friends and acquaintances wondered at the gloom for which they could assign no cause, and his mother was anxious about him. But he confided his troubles to no one. His misery was heightened, yet by a strange contradiction lessened, by the reflection that if Hope loved him she, too, would be rendered unhappy. Something in her manner, in her tone of voice, while talking to him—in her very looks, had betrayed her feelings for him, all unconsciously to her. He felt quite certain that she cared for him. Sometimes he thought of ceasing to visit her, and he would stay away from Mr. Watkins' for awhile, but something seemed ever to throw them together, and he learned, but learned "too late," that she was the polar star of his existence. At last, worn-out with the continual conflict, he determined to tell her all, though her plainly expressed opinion of such matters left him no hope of winning her, if she knew the truth, even

if he was dishonorable enough to desert Amelia for her. He hated the idea of her thinking him false or fickle, however, and so told her the exact state of affairs ; with what result the reader knows already. Perhaps but few girls would have acted as Hope did, and she might not have done so at all periods of her life ; but of late Christian principles had taken a very deep root in her heart, and she felt that it would be very wrong to do anything to win another woman's affianced husband, even though that one had injured her very deeply in the past. But it cost her a bitter struggle to carry out her principles. Not until she felt that Rodney's presence would cheer her no longer did she realize the magnitude of her loss. It was comparatively easy to speak of the dreary future when he was by her side, his dark eyes gazing fondly upon her, his voice telling her of the love he bore her ; but now that he seemed to have faded out of her life, it was at times very hard to endure the thought of a life-time separation from the object of her tenderest regard. During the hours of her school, when her whole attention was needed for the duties of the day, employment served as an opiate to pain, but when the curtains of night were drawn around her, or during the sacred stillness of the Sabbath evening, when she had full opportunity for reflection, she would often catch herself dreaming of Rodney and wondering where he was and whether he ever thought of her now. Her preparations for her school exhibition went on. Even her cherished drawings were neglected in her anxious desire to have it a success. Rehearsing dialogues and speeches after school hours, and hearing the scholars rehearse them, practising tableau scenes, making artificial flowers to adorn the stage, and devising appropriate mottoes for the same, jogging the memories of her patrons in regard to arrangements she deemed necessary, going through a world of toil undreamed of by those who have never tried it, no wonder

that the bloom on her cheek faded and she grew thinner than ever. Mr. and Mrs. Watkins noticed the change and ascribed it all to Rodney.

"She has never been the same," said the lady privately to her husband, "since the last day Mr. Gilbert was here. She is too proud to wittingly betray her feelings, yet I can easily see the difference."

"Can it be possible that he has trifled with her?" inquired Mr. Watkins.

"I hardly think so," was her reply, "for the last evening he was here he looked as sad as if he had just heard his own death warrant read."

"At any rate," said he, "it is reported that he is courting a young lady in town who has lately come there on a visit, and I think I shall let Miss Hope know of it. It will be the greatest kindness that I can do her, for she is too proud, I think, to suffer herself to love a man who does not care for her."

The next morning at the breakfast table he said :

"Miss Hope, there is now, I hear, the prettiest girl in town who has ever been there. Though this is her second visit there the young fellows are half crazy about her. Mr. Gilbert, they say, is waiting on her."

"Who is she," she inquired, controlling her feelings by a strong effort.

"Her name, I think, is Montcalm—Miss Amelia Montcalm ; probably she is of French descent."

Mrs. Watkins stole a look at Hope and saw that her face was of an ashen paleness, though she was sipping her coffee as if quite calm. She thought her husband cruel in his kindness, and strove to mend matters.

"I do not envy the girl who marries Rodney Gilbert," she remarked. "He is rich and somewhat talented, it is true, but sarcastic and hard to please."

"I think, so far as I can judge of him," said Hope,

unflinching, "that Mr. Gilbert is both noble and true, and I believe he will be kind to his wife if he marries."

Her words left her hearers more mystified than ever. Could it be possible that she spoke thus to utterly mislead others in regard to her feelings for Rodney, or was she weak enough to defend one who had jilted her? They could not tell, and so wondered in vain in regard to the matter. As for our heroine, she was deeply agitated to know that, under existing circumstances, Amelia was not far from her. She dreaded the idea of meeting her, especially in company with Rodney. The thought was very bitter. One evening soon after this she had started from the school-room en route for home, when the clatter of horses' hoofs behind her caused her to turn her head, and she descried a lady and gentleman approaching whom, upon first glimpse, she recognized as Rodney and Amelia. They checked the speed of their horses as they neared her, and she had a full opportunity to observe them as they passed. Amelia, with her fair face, her golden curls streaming in the wind, the blue riding habit setting off the graceful form to the best advantage, and the blue plume on her hat mingling with her yellow locks, seemed too fair for earth, and her escort looked handsomer than Hope had ever seen him before. Both bowed as they passed, Amelia with a supercilious smile, Rodney profoundly and almost reverently. The young teacher had never suffered a moment of keener distress in her life. The contrast between her and Amelia was so striking in every respect that for awhile she felt almost humiliated.

"She is beautiful, rich and born under a lucky star, while I am neither pretty, rich nor fortunate," was her unspoken thought, crushed back by a determined will. Then she wondered why Rodney had chosen to ride along the road which she frequented. Could he not have spared her the mortification of meeting him under such circum-

stances? or did he wish to see her, if but for a moment? or could it be possible that he had deceived her after all? and was her rival the real object of his love? This last thought she suppressed as disparaging to her lover. "Rodney had not deceived her; the tone of his voice, his looks, his agitation, had betrayed him, even more than his words. Perhaps, though, knowing his attachment for her to be useless, he had striven to love Amelia and had succeeded." She strove to resign herself to this thought, but it would not do. She was tortured by reflections that would come unbidden in her mind. Herbert Ransom was a very dear friend to her during these bitter hours. Intuitively he seemed to guess at the truth, and in many different ways strove to win her heart from sadness without once intruding on her grief or its source. He never spoke of Amelia now, but oftentimes, when she was in her company, he dwelt feelingly on the blessed need of affliction, on the passing nature of earthly joy and the stability of Heaven, on the goodness of the Lord in who^{she} with^{her} that he may heal, in giving pain but to make pleasure the sweeter. Then he contrived many little ways of diverting her mind; he escorted her to church, carried her to ride of evenings, and managed to win her to cheerfulness. Of course Madam Rumor even noised it around that he was in love with our heroine, and Rodney heard, with an anguish that he could scarcely conceal, that the two were betrothed. In vain reason whispered that it ought not to affect him, as she was already beyond his reach; the thought awakened all the latent jealousy of his heart, and he was restless and miserable, even while the music of Amelia's voice filled the air, redolent with the perfume of roses, and the blue sky seemed too pure and bright for aught but happiness to rest beneath it. Hope had touched a chord in his nature which no other hand but hers could thrill, but the harmony she could awaken turned to discord in her absence. He

fancied what a different man he would be if she were his, how all the misanthropy engendered by long, loveless years, would be swept away from the chamber of his heart ; of how his better nature would expand under her influence, and his whole being be filled with happy love as in his boyhood, and it maddened him to think of being deprived of her. Oh, for one touch of her hand, for one sweet word of comfort from her lips ! He turned almost with horror from the thought of his union with Amelia. She was beautiful, accomplished, fascinating, yet he knew now why he had not loved her before—she was destitute of heart ! The evening on which they had overtaken Hope it was not his intention to take that route, but as she expressed a particular desire to go in that direction, he had no alternative but to do as she wished. After seeing the young teacher she remarked “that she was pretty, and that her face seemed familiar ;” and when Rodney told her her name, she rejoined carelessly, “Oh, yes, I knew that I had seen her before ; we were schoolmates once.” Instantly there flashed into Rodney’s mind the memory of Hope’s agitation when she saw Amelia’s picture, as also her total silence in regard to their acquaintanceship, and he was convinced that some mystery underlay the whole matter. For the remainder of the way he was almost entirely silent, and Amelia grew pettish and irritated at the too evident abstraction of his mind. She wondered if the sight of Hope did not have something to do with his conduct, and she determined to pry into the matter. Meanwhile the teacher was so occupied with her school duties, as also in receiving and returning calls from her patrons as to give her but little time to think. Mrs. Ambler, Mrs. Powers, Mrs. Turnnage, Mrs. Hunter, and last, but not least, Miss Rachel Tyler, had all visited her, and she felt in duty bound to return their calls. Herbert Ransom offered to accompany her to Miss Rachel’s, for he

was well acquainted with her, she being a consistent member of his church. The other ladies whom Hope had called on were all the wives of well-to-do men, and were pleasant, sociable and hospitable. Miss Rachel belonged to a rather different sphere, though occupying a respectable position in society. Her chances, though, had been exceedingly narrow, her education limited and her life one of hardship. Her house was four miles from Mr. Watkins' The house was about three hundred yards from the main road. It was a frame house, with but two rooms beside the one back of the main portion of the dwelling, which answered for a kitchen ; yet Hope was struck with the air of thrift and neatness pervading everything in and around it. The palings around the yard were in perfect repair, and were newly whitewashed ; the yard was filled with the perfume of flowers and carefully swept, and the floor of the piazza and two rooms composing the dwelling were scoured until they looked clean enough for Queen Victoria to take her meals on them, and every piece of unpainted furniture in the room was of immaculate whiteness. The window curtains, counterpanes, towels and pillow-slips were all home-made, woven by the industrious Miss Rachel, and against the whitewashed walls hung several pictures—the portraits of General Washington and his wife, the death of Stonewall Jackson and one or two fancy faces of young girls with a profusion of curls and an abundance of lace around their low-necked, short-sleeved dresses. These last pictures Euphemia, Octavia and Adolphus regarded as models of feminine beauty, and exclamations of "Ain't they pretty ! I do wish I was as pretty as they are !" were quite common with these simple children of nature, as they surveyed them. Poor Miss Rachel had bought them all from an agent and paid a most exorbitant price for them, but possibly she got the worth of her money, after all, so genuine was her delight in possessing them and in seeing

the children enjoy looking at them. When Hope arrived she was out in the kitchen "fixin' some light bread," she said; but she made her appearance in a very short time, and seemed much pleased to see Hope.

"I thought maybe you wouldn't come to see me," was her frank avowal. "I know you have so much more book larnin' than me, and then, too, I'm old and poor, till I thought perhaps you wouldn't think it worth your while to come."

The young teacher was taken so much by surprise that she scarcely knew what to say, but she told her that it was "not only a duty, but a pleasure to visit her," and assured her that "she was perfectly charmed with her home."

"Well, I have managed to keep things together here, but it has been hard work, Miss Hope. It 'pears to me sometimes that the Lord makes some people jest to work, and I think I must be one of 'em, but I don't mean to complain. I helped my mother raise all her other children, and when I began to think of marrying and having a home of my own, my oldest brother (though all was younger than me) sez :

"Rachel, I wouldn't marry; I would send Will Brown-ing adrift; he's a lazy, drinking fellow, and won't make you a good husband. Well, maybe he was right; anyway I took his advice, and sure enough Will does get drunk and don't make a good husband, but maybe ef he'd married his first love and had had a different sort of wife he'd been different."

Hope was amused, yet touched at this display of womanly weakness in one like Miss Rachel. Evidently the weight of sixty years, the loss of hope, absence, time, nor anything else, had the power to entirely drive from remembrance her dream of first love. Its memory in Miss Rachel's case was lasting as life.

"Well," Miss Tyler continued, "it was a good thing

for brother that I did stay single, for when he left these three orphan children I don't know what would have become of them if it hadn't been for me. He just left this place and them to me, and nobody knows what work it has been to get along. Sometimes I help hoe cotton."

"Help hoe!" exclaimed Hope; "is it possible?"

"Yes, indeed, me and these children generally does most all the work. But I've scratched along and gotten a little aforehanded now, and intend to give them all a chance to get an eddication. I feels the need of it myself, and don't want them to be like me."

"Miss Rachel, you are more useful and have done more good in the world than many educated people that I know."

"Yes, child, but sposin' I had an eddication, jest look how much good I could do helpin' these children along in their lessons, readin' the Bible to them and singin'. Sometimes when I goes to church in town and hears Mrs. Ambler a singin' and playin' on the organ, I think I wouldent begrudge no money ef I could do jest like her."

"True enough," replied the teacher, but you have improved your one talent more than many have their ten."

"Miss Hope, I don't see why it is, but you ain't a bit like some teachers we've had. Why, Miss Mary Perkins used to fly by here with her beaux, and never even turn her head to speak to me. I didn't care to send the children to her, she was so proud, though folks said she knew a heap in books. But you seem to know how to feel for poor, ignorant folks like me—not but what I feel myself as good and respectable as anybody," straightening herself up; "but there's a difference."

"Yes, there is a difference," replied Hope, "but it is just the difference that to some the Master gives ten, to some five, and to others but one talent, and the one who has ten has ten times the responsibility that the person has

who has but one talent. Shall I then look down on one not so highly gifted as myself, when my gifts render me liable to greater punishment?"

"Of course 'taint right, but people does it all the same. Brother Ransom, wont you take this little basket and go get some plums for Miss Hope? I know she'll like 'em."

"That I do," replied she; "but suppose we all go. I want to see your little place."

She was well rewarded for her pains. The farm was a small one, but carefully tilled and kept in good order. The corn looked flourishing, the cotton the same, and the wheat waving in the breeze was almost ready for the sickle. The garden, which was neatly railed in, bore abundant evidence of the care which had been taken of it. Beans, Irish potatoes, squashes, tomatoes, okra and other vegetables, had each their appropriate place, and the walks were bordered with "sweet shrub," snow-ball and roses. Raspberry bushes grew in profusion around the palings, and there was a small space allotted to strawberries. Outside was a thin patch of roasting-ears. Then there was a fowl-yard, surrounded by a very high fence, where innumerable fowls were cackling, chucking and gobbling.

"I suppose you raise a great many chickens, Miss Rachel?" inquired Mr. Ransom.

"Yes sir, I sell enough eggs and chickens every year to buy my sugar, coffee and snuff, besides all our Sunday clothes."

"Pretty good," he replied; "you are certainly a good manager. I know a plenty of strong, healthy men, with no more to support them than you have, and with equally as good a start, who don't seem to get along."

"That's because they don't work, spend their time and money at grog-shops instead of at home, or else their wives don't know how to manage. Some men work hard and their wives waste what they make. Something's most always

wrong when people don't get along around here, for everybody can get along who will work and save, if they are healthy. That's one blessin' I enjoy, brother Ransom."

"And a very great one, my sister; it is, next to a good conscience and good sense, the greatest of God's gifts to poor fallen man."

They had reached the orchard by this time, which, though a small one, contained several varieties of delicious fruit. The trees were hanging with plums, barely ripe, and it was an easy task to fill the little basket. As they reached the house upon their return, the three children who had been off attending to the sheep and hogs, as also bringing their one milch cow home, came in the yard. Great was their delight at beholding their teacher.

"I am a goin' to bring you a basket of plums every day," said Adolphus, "until they're gone."

"I shall certainly be obliged," was her reply, "for I dearly love plums. But you won't have to bring them long, school will be out next week, you know."

"I am so glad," the children exclaimed; "but not to part with you, Miss Hope. I wish you could stay with us always."

As they all stood together on the piazza she, with an artistic eye, took in the whole scene. The house was situated on a slight rise, and on either side of the avenue leading to it the soil was in a high state of cultivation. On one side was a field of corn, the green blades contrasting beautifully with the dark soil on which it grew; on the other a field of wheat waved on the evening breeze. A patch of cotton was opposite one end of the house, the garden and orchard the other. The sinking sun touched the tree-tops which girded the place with his golden beams; the birds were singing their farewell songs; everything breathed an atmosphere of repose and peace; everything bespoke the blessedness of industry and contentment.

"I will never forget this visit so long as I live," said she to Herbert Ransom upon their return; "I have learned many very useful lessons this afternoon. No one loses by visiting the good, no matter how lowly their station."

"Miss Rachel, though peculiar, is one of 'the salt of the earth,' rejoined he; few, indeed, are like her."

Mrs. Hartwell, Mrs. Twining and Mrs. Simmons did not call upon Hope at Mrs. Watkins' house, and from the description she heard of the two former ladies, she did not regret it, as she did not care to cultivate their acquaintance. Poor old Mrs. Simmons, however, she rather liked. There were some of her patrons whose wives she did not see until the day of her school exhibition. That day was both wished for and dreaded, by our heroine.

CHAPTER XV.

The roll-call was read in school, and when Violet Leonard's name was called there was no answer.

"Does anyone know why Violet is not here?" inquired Hope.

"She is sick, ma'am," said one of the scholars, "I believe, with diphtheria."

Diphtheria! How many families have cause to shudder at that word; over how many households has it hovered a destroying angel, smiting the little ones with a fatal stroke and leaving desolation in its path! Hope's heart sank at the sound, a sad foreboding filled her mind. She could scarcely perform her day's duties with ordinary cheerfulness. She determined to visit Violet at the very earliest opportunity, and the next evening after school, according

to a previous arrangement, Mrs. Watkins came by in the buggy for her.

"I cannot carry James or Willie with me," said she, "and I shall even be careful in changing my clothes after I return home, to prevent my little ones from running any possible risk of contagion ; but I cannot keep away from a neighbor when in distress through selfish fears for my own household."

It was only a mile from the school-house to Mrs. Leonard's. The residence of that lady was a picturesque-looking one, though evidently not in as good repair as it should be. But the lovely flower-yard betokened the refined taste of its inmates. Hope had heard of Mrs. Leonard as a pretty woman, but she was not prepared to see the girlish-looking beauty who met them at the door with the easy grace of a well-bred woman, though on her face a sad look rested, and a weary, anxious expression, in striking contrast with the peachy bloom of the plump cheeks and the youthful appearance of the lady. After inviting them in the parlor and chatting for a few moments, she spoke of Violet's sickness, and inquired if they would like to see her ? On being answered in the affirmative, she led the way to another room.

"I am perhaps unreasonable in my anxiety about Violet," she remarked, as they went ; "but diphtheria frightens me quite as much as yellow fever would."

By Violet's bedside sat a lady whom Hope had never seen before, a tall, elegantly formed lady, with a plain face. She was clad in black robes, and there was an exquisite neatness about her dress which struck Hope, even at the moment of their introduction. She was introduced to Hope as Miss Hunter. Violet's eyes were strangely bright, and her usually pale cheeks flushed, and Hope thought her more beautiful than she had ever before seen her. She seemed not to wish to talk. Hope had never seen her thus,

and it distressed her to see her so changed. She kissed the sweet little brow and sat down by the bedside, quietly taking the feather-brush to keep away the flies. There was a step in the hall, a familiar step, yet one she had not heard for several days, for Mr. Leonard had not been home since Violet's illness, and the little one's face perceptibly brightened. Mr. Leonard was unmistakably a handsome man, though dissipation had placed its seal on his countenance. There was a look of tender anxiety on his face, as he saw his child extended on a couch of illness. He was presented to Hope, bowed courteously, but seemed wholly wrapped up in thoughts of Violet.

"How long has she been sick?" he inquired of his wife, and on being informed of the length of her illness he inquired if Dr. Bertram had been sent for.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Leonard, "he has been here twice."

He sat down by the bedside, and taking Violet's two little hands, rubbed them over his face.

"Papa," she said in a whisper that was still audible to the little party assembled in the sick room, "are you a bad man?"

"Why, my child, what a strange question! I hope not; but what makes you ask?"

"Well, Joe Liggins said so," she replied, "because he said you made his father drunk and won all his money, and then he went home and beat him and beat his mother. He said something bad was going to happen to you, and then I got sick, but I would rather it should be me than you, papa."

A swarthy glow burned on Mr. Leonard's cheek, a flush of mingled shame and anger, and his eyes flashed as he said:

"Joe Liggins had better keep his tongue instead of prating about what he has no business. I did not make his father drunk, and if I won his money it was done fairly

and I did not make him beat his family either. Hope stole a glance at Mrs. Leonard. All of the color had fled from her face, and there was a strong despair there, an utterly reckless look, as of one who, having nothing to live for, has no fear of death. A cold, superstitious fear crept over Hope. She was not much of a believer in temporal punishment, for does not the "sun shine on the good and the evil alike?" Yet it seemed to her that from that moment she believed that Violet's fate was sealed. In mercy to her, as well as in mercy to her father, she would be taken ; for how could such a tender, sensitive little creature ever bear the trials to which she must necessarily be exposed ? and perhaps her death might win her father to righteousness. A mist swam before her eyes at the thought, a sick feeling took possession of her heart. Was it to be the case that she could not even love a child that the little one did not die ? Was she destined to an utterly loveless existence ? To describe the tableau after Violet's unexpected words would require better descriptive powers than we possess. Mr. Leonard's face expressed anger and shame combined ; Mrs. Leonard's was utterly despairing ; Miss Hunter strove to hide her feelings by a veil of polite indifference, while Hope and Mrs. Watkins looked all the sadness they felt—a sadness not unmixed with indignation against Mr. Leonard for bringing sorrow on an innocent wife and child.

"A man cannot pursue any calling without meeting with opposition on every side," continued he. "Mr. Liggins was just angry because he lost. Had he won it would have been all right."

Hope noticed the excited look on little Violet's face, and forgetting timidity and the natural embarrassment of a stranger under such circumstances, said :

"You had better not talk much, Mr. Leonard, as you value the life of your child ; it will excite her too much."

He glared at her for a moment, but she quailed not beneath his glance, and with a muttered oath he strode out of the room. There was profound silence in the apartment for a few moments. Mrs. Leonard, overcome by emotions, sunk on her knees beside Violet. Mrs. Watkins and Miss Hunter sat quietly weeping, while Hope, with almost superhuman effort, crushed back the tears, anxious lest Violet should witness them and inquire into their cause. Thus, for a few moments; then Mrs. Leonard spoke:

"Excuse me, my friends, but I have grown weak and nervous of late; trouble has made me powerless to control myself."

They were all too full to speak, and after a sufficiently long time had elapsed for them to leave without still more distressing Mrs. Leonard by an abrupt departure, Mrs. Watkins and Hope rose to go.

"I will come again to see you, Violet," said Hope, "and if you continue sick will be here Friday night to wait on you."

The little girl lookd steadfastly at her—a wistful look in the clear blue eyes—but said nothing, and kissing her brow Hope turned away with a sick heart. She was true to her promise, returning again on Friday and watching through the long, weary hours with untiring patience, soothing as best she could the couch of her little favorite. In a few days Violet was thought out of danger, and with a lighter heart Hope went on with her preparations for the school exhibition. Busy, anxious days they were," so freighted with absorbing care as almost to drive the thought of Rodney Gilbert from her mind. Who shall deem that intense mental effort and anxiety is only for those who aspire to kingdoms or crowns? The poor country teacher, laboring for the good of her pupils and anxious to gain a reputation as a successful instructor, may suffer every conflict of hope and fear and feel as intense anxiety to

accomplish this end, as a general to win a battle, or the hero to gain a throne. And what human being who has not experienced it can tell the almost sickening anxiety which racks the mind when our own success is partially dependent on the efforts of others ?

CHAPTER XVI.

[This description being very nearly that of a "school-breaking" at which the author was present, we trust that any defect in the picture will be kindly overlooked.]

The necessary arrangement for accommodating such a crowd as was expected at the "school-breaking" had all been made previous to the eventful day itself, and by the most unremitting exertions on her own part, and by the assistance of ladies of the neighborhood, the school-room presented a much more attractive appearance than usual. A kind of stage had been improvised for the occasion, the background of which was decorated with evergreens, intermingled with flowers and festooned at proper intervals. Pictures were hung in every loop and over the centre of the stage was suspended a rustic hanging basket, filled with trailing vines. The doors and windows were also decorated with evergreens and appropriate mottoes. The stage was neatly carpeted and had a row of footlights in front of it, as the exhibition was to take place at night. The girls, all dressed in white, looked quite pretty and interesting, but there were some eccentricities in the attire of one or two of the boys. Thomas Jefferson and George Washington Simmons each wore a blue suit, with shining shirt-bosoms

and collars and flaming red neck-ties. This last item of their apparel offended Hope's æsthetic nature to such an extent that she ventured to suggest a change in it, but the mortified expressions of their countenances showed so plainly that their hearts were set on these particular articles of their dress, that she determined to let them remain as they were. Josiah and Sam Liggins were well dressed, only their pantaloons were a trifle too short and their shoes needed blacking. Hope had done her utmost, both by precept and example, to inculcate neatness, and to a certain extent good taste in her scholars, but what teacher, however conscientious, can entirely counteract the home influences which surround a pupil? Instruction can do much, the outer influences of the world can effect much, but after all home example and the lessons instilled in the little ones around the family hearthstone are the most powerful of all. The majority of Hope's pupils, however, presented a remarkably good appearance. They were all seated on long benches upon the stage on this, the eventful night of the exhibition, and to one interested in the well-being and progress of the young, their eager, excited faces and youthful forms were a pleasing spectacle. It suggested thoughts of a future irradiated by the light of intelligence, instead of one darkened by clouds of ignorance. Hope herself read the title of each piece. The first was the "Lord's Prayer," recited by the whole school in unison. As they stood, with heads reverently bowed, and repeated the words which have been handed down to us for eighteen centuries, a hush fell upon the audience—a feeling almost of awe pervaded it. It was childhood speaking to matured years and pointing the way to Heaven. A song came next, whose words of welcome and gladness fell gratefully upon the ears of the hearers. Then David Wheeler came forward, and in his fine, melodious tones and clear enunciation, made the opening address, thanking the audience for

coming to hear their humble efforts, recalling to mind the memories of the past few months, and indulging in a glowing picture of what he trusted his own future would be, as well as that of his schoolmates and of the Old North State. He paid a grateful tribute to his teacher and to her efforts in their behalf, and ended with a panegyric on the advantages of education. This speech being David's own composition was much admired, and was rapturously applauded. Music followed. Two young gentlemen of the neighborhood had volunteered to play on the violin, Mrs. Ambler accompanying them on the organ. This gave agreeable variety to the entertainment. A kind of tableau piece, entitled "The Seasons," in which Mrs. Turnnidge's three children and Katie Powers personated, respectively, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, was next in order. There was a little corner of the stage partitioned off by curtains to which the pupils withdrew to make any necessary additions to their attire in each piece. Spring was clad in a light green dress, with a crown of half-blown roses on her head; Summer in a thin white one, with flowers more fully matured, intermingled with early fruits, in her hand and crowning her locks. Autumn, with a many-hued dress, and bearing a basket of ripened grain and luscious grapes, while Winter, with robes drawn tightly around him, a wreath of holly-berries on his head, and snow-flakes thickly strewn over his attire, was well personated by Katie Powers. Even this simple piece had cost Hope some thought, time and trouble. A composition followed—an entirely original one—having for its subject "The Horse." Considering that the author had not known his alphabet at the beginning of the session, the effort, though a crude, was certainly a creditable one. "A Little Boy's Troubles" were next, strikingly told by Harry Ambler, and it was quite amusing to the audience. Katie Turnnidge then recited "The Voice of Spring" very cred-

itably. Another composition followed and another song, then a second performance by the amateur musicians, and afterwards "The Presidents of the United States" in verse was repeated in unison by all of the scholars. "The World for Sale" was next in order, James Powers, whom we have not before mentioned, being the auctioneer. Roy Wilkins recited "My Funny Uncle Phil" in quite an agreeable way; then came a very humorous dialogue entitled "The Refractory Scholar," provoking peals of laughter from the audience. Leola Wilkins next told "Mamie's Wants and Wishes" in sweet, childish tones, which elicited universal admiration. Ida Hunter recited the pathetic story of "Ginevra," and Meta Powers "Before and After Marriage" in quite a dramatic manner. "Dare to Say No," "The Ten Little Grasshoppers," "Time Enough Yet," "Dimes and Dollars," "Boys' Rights," and other short, pithy pieces were repeated by other pupils. The last and best performance was a half musical, half tableau piece, in which the Christian Graces—Patience, Faith, Virtue, Temperance, Knowledge, Hope, Experience, Godliness, Love and Charity, were personated by ten girls, each wearing a shield with her own name inscribed upon it in gilt letters. As a verse explaining the scene was sung Patience entered, bearing a white cross upon her shoulders. Then Faith came and hung a wreath on one arm of the cross; next Virtue placed one upon the other. Temperance then twined lilies, intermingled with evergreens, about the body of the cross, while Knowledge placed a basket of fruit beneath. Hope, with her anchor, next appeared and pointed upward; then, as Patience deposited her cross upon the ground, Experience came and assisted her in holding it. Love and Godliness appeared together, Love repeating the words, "Let us love one another;" and lastly, Charity, personated by Leola Wilkins, knelt reverently at the foot of the cross; Experience raising her up, all the virtues joined.

hands and circled around it. Then all separated, bearing Faith, Hope and Charity in the centre, and as a chorus was sung all the graces left the stage, Charity going last, with the cross upon her shoulders. It was a lovely scene, and made a deep impression upon the spectators. The singing of "The Old North State" terminated the entertainment, Mrs. Ambler playing the accompaniment upon the organ.

The whole exhibition was gratifying to the teacher and interesting to the crowd assembled to witness it. True, there were some little incidents so ludicrous as to provoke a good-humored smile, but these did not mar the effect of the whole. Even Tom and George Simmons, Josiah and Sam Liggins and Johnnie Twining acquitted themselves wonderfully. As for Mrs. Simmons, poor old lady, when her two sons had gotten successfully through their speeches, and had read their compositions correctly, she could stand no more. The weight of happiness was too great to be borne, and she sobbed aloud. Had the deceased Mr. Simmons' prophecy been fulfilled, and her two boys been elevated to the presidential chair, she could not have been more purely happy. Hope was amused, yet touched ; for a ray of joy penetrated her heart to think that under Heaven she had been the means of gladdening the heart of even one poor old ignorant woman. When the exercises were concluded she felt that a mountain had been rolled from her shoulders, and as friends and patrons crowded around congratulating her on her success and complimenting the performance of the pupils, she felt repaid for her labor in their behalf. Rodney and Amelia were there, and nothing could have been more embarrassing to Hope than their presence. She did not know what might be his feelings for her now, but she felt sure that in her inmost soul her rival was exulting in the thought of the contrast between their conditions. She, Hope, a poor country teacher, and Amelia the affianced wife of a rich and talented

man. It required all the effort of a strong will to crush back the feelings that would come to her, despite her better judgment. She felt that she ought to be grateful, but she could not at once feel so. She was solicited to take charge of the school the next session, but she could not bear the thought of being in Rodney's neighborhood, and so would make no arrangement in regard to it. Her one thought was to get away from the crowd, who were enjoying themselves at the pleasant picnic dinner brought by the scholars, and to be alone. Her intention was to return home the day after the exhibition was over, if possible to make her arrangements to do so. Then came a messenger informing her that Violet was again very ill, and she repaired at once to Mrs. Leonard's. One glance at her little favorite convinced Hope that she was indeed ill, perhaps more so than even anyone else imagined. There was a sad, weary look on the little face, a wistful expression, as of one longing for the brightness beyond. The same lady whom Hope had met before was sitting by the child, and for three days and nights the two and Mrs. Leonard alternated in watching over the little one. She suffered greatly at times, but at other times she was quiet and free from pain, and saying all manner of quaint things provoked a smile, even though a sad one, in her watchers. Physicians came and consulted together, and looked puzzled as those who are at their wit's ends, and then, when the heart was growing sick with suspense, they broke the tidings as gently as they could; "the child would die, perhaps not very soon, but there was no hope." Oh, the sadness of the mother's heart, the unutterable feeling that came over her at this sentence! Mr. Leonard, too, seemed much grieved. Violet, little Violet, so like the flower whose name she bore in her sweet modesty, why could the spoiler not overlook thee in his hunt after victims? Hope's heart, already weighed down by sorrows of [its own, participated in the grief of the

parents. She loved the child, loved her dearly, and it was a terrible reflection to feel that nevermore would she see her well and strong, and that very soon she must die. She was ready to exclaim with the Psalmist, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me." "I will never have any one to love," she said, repiningly to herself; "no one but mother, and perhaps not her long. Everything I love is snatched away from me. I cannot see that it makes me better." Then she reproached herself for feeling so, and contrasted her condition with that of others less favored than herself. "Think even of Mrs. Leonard, with a husband who is wild and dissipated, and her little one dying! How infinitely superior is my condition to hers!" There were many presents of hot-house fruits and lovely flowers sent to Violet during her illness, all seeming to come from the same source, but it was not till afterwards that Hope ascertained who sent them. Miss Hunter was a superior nurse. Hope was not deficient in that respect, yet in experience and touch Miss Hunter surpassed her. The days and nights dragged their slow length along, Violet at times brightening up and seeming better, at other times worse, until six days had elapsed, and with agonizing emotion parents and friends felt that the final change was near at hand. She was very patient, speaking sometimes of God and Heaven and of the loved ones she would meet there; at other times seeming too weary to wish to hear anything, only looking sadly and fixedly away. Just before she died she was free from all pain and spoke affectionately to all, but none told her that she was dying, and the sweet spirit passed into everlasting life as calmly as an infant sinks to sleep. With tearful eyes Hope and Hiss Hunter arranged her for the grave, and no statue of marble was ever lovelier than the dear little corpse in white robes, with pale flowers clasped in her hands. It was a very sad day. Friends came and went, stealing noiselessly about the

chamber of death, speaking in low tones and stealthily turning back the funeral pall to gaze on the sweet dead features, so like sculptured marble in their repose. A smile lay on the perfect face, a peaceful smile, almost life-like in expression. Miss Hunter was not only a good nurse, but a great comfort in distress, and she and Hope spent much of their time with Mrs. Leonard, endeavoring by sweetest sympathy to allay her grief. She was not violent, however. There was a fixed, despairing look on her face, a calmness in her aspect, which was far different from the feelings of her soul. Ever and anon she stole to the side of her darling, placing her hand upon the snowy brow, imprinting kiss after kiss upon it, but shedding no tear, only sighing as though her heart would break. Mr. Leonard was different. His lamentations were loud and violent, but he suffered no one to approach him. The day of the funeral the house was crowded with visitors, and Hope could but reflect on the levity and indifference of the majority of those who came to a house of grief, as she noticed how cheerful and in what good spirits the most of them seemed. Mr. Ransom was to preach the funeral sermon. His text was, "He shall gather the lambs in his arms and fold them in his bosom." He dwelt feelingly and pathetically on the care of the Great Shepherd, on his anxiety to see the young of the flock safely protected from storm and danger, on his foreknowledge of the difficult paths of life and his kindness in removing them from a state of trial to the blessedness of Heaven. Much more was spoken in the same manner, his voice, his looks betraying the feelings of his soul, all indicating the most profound sympathy for the bereaved ones. There was a hymn sung in which Hope could not join, and services over, the procession was formed to bear away the dear little body of Violet to the family grave-yard near by. Slowly and sadly the crowd moved on to the spot where

reposed the dead ancestors of the little one. It was a pleasant place, neatly railed in, with flowers blooming near the graves and one or two white tombs gleaming through the shrubbery, with cedar-trees near, in whose tops the birds sang during the spring days. It seemed a fitting place for the little one to sleep. Hope felt glad that her favorite would be left amid birds and flowers, not in some deserted burial-ground ; for though no harm could come to the little body, yet in imagination she would seem happier than amid utter desolation. The coffin was opened at the grave for all to look for the last time on the little features so soon to be consigned to the dust. Oh ! that last look ! how different from all others ! what a feeling of awe it inspires in the heart ! Mr. Leonard knelt by the coffin as though he could never leave it, sobbing convulsively, while Mrs. Leonard, pale as marble, stood by him uttering not a sound—a sad-eyed Niobe. At length the father was persuaded away, friends and acquaintances went to look their last on little Violet, the coffin was lowered in the grave, the clods fell with hollow sound upon it, each spadefull of earth shutting out a ray of hope from the heart left to utter gloom. Oh ! the unspeakable sadness of the death-parting ! how strange it seems that the heart should ever awake to happiness after such a sad realization of the utter emptiness of worldly things ! But so it is, and scarcely is the earth smoothed over the grave of some acquaintance ere the world creeps in the heart again, the gay laugh and sportive jest resound upon the air and the memory of the dead is left to oblivion.

Rodney Gilbert was present at the burial and returned to the house with the funeral procession. Mr. Watkins and his wife were there, but their's was a single buggy and would be crowded with three in it, and Hope was anxious to return home, as Mrs. Leonard's sister (who had just come to visit her, would render Hope's longer stay

unnecessary, and she was already worn out with fatigue and loss of sleep. It was no more than polite that Rodney Gilbert offered Hope a seat in his phaeton, in which he had come alone, yet she felt reluctant to accept it. A dread stole upon her which she was at a loss to define. Rodney had never been sadder. His mind seemed to dwell on mournful themes, and the expression of his countenance betrayed the mental pain which was with him always. After awhile he said, abruptly :

“Miss Hope, I have no doubt that you have often thought me a gloomy, morose man, with none of that brightness which is so charming in every one, but bearing about a discontented spirit where it seemed that I should have been happy. It is so ; the gifts which others prize so highly are mine ; fortune, health, good standing in society, friends, or at least those who appear so, a good education and a literary turn, besides my being betrothed to one of the most beautiful girls in the State. (This last was said with a bitter smile.) Yet a thousand times have I wished that I had remained as poor as I was in boyhood. But let me tell you my history. My father was a farmer in humble circumstances, and I the pet and pride of his life. What ambitious dreams he cherished for me, poor man ! He had something of a literary turn, and took great pains in instructing me at home, besides giving me the best advantages that the country schools afforded, which, as it chanced, were unusually good in our neighborhood. I was deemed a prodigy at school. At sixteen years of age I could declaim in a most fluent manner. I read Latin and French with ease and had a smattering of Greek. About a mile from us lived a gentleman whose two daughters attended the same school, and for a mile our route lay together. I carried their books, assisted them over the creeks, laughed, talked and studied with them, helped them to write their compositions, gathered spring flowers

with them, until the two seemed as near as sisters to me; and Mary Argyle! Oh! she was a thousand times nearer! She was the eldest of the two, a lovely girl, bright and intelligent, with sweet, modest, yet free and easy ways, which completely won my boyish heart. I had no hopes, no dreams for the future, with which she was not entwined. While at school I spoke not to her of love, but when my father, who by hard labor and stinting economy had saved money enough to send me to college one year, told me of his plans. I determined to tell her all that was in my heart. June roses were flinging their fragrance on the air, the leaves were dancing in the breezes, the sunshine, warm and tender as my love, was over everything when I told her of my hopes and besought her to become my wife in the future. Oh, what plans I laid for that future; how I would work and study and strive and delve for her; of what a home I would have for her, and how happy we would be. During the four years that I was to remain at college (for my father, by mortgaging some of his land, managed to keep me during a portion of the time, and I taught school to help defray expenses) my attachment for Mary knew not the shadow of change. When I was twenty my father died, and just then a distant relative left me his fortune. There was no necessity for me to drudge and toil now. I could take Mary to even a more elegant home than the one I had pictured. Yet my heart was saddened at the thought of my poor father dying just before Fortune had begun to smile upon him. I returned home a graduate from one of the best colleges in our State, with a determination to go one year to the University of Virginia, then to marry Mary and carry her with me to Philadelphia during the time that I studied medicine there, for it was my darling object to become a good physician. Judge of my surprise, my consternation, my horror, on being informed by my mother that Mary Argyle was no

fitting wife for me in my position. I am a believer in obeying the Commandments, the one with promise especially. Yet I think that even you will be prepared to excuse me when I tell you that I vowed to let no human being stand in the way of my happiness—to marry Mary if mother never spoke to me afterwards. But I met with opposition where I was not prepared for it. Mary's father, on learning of my mother's opposition, forbade her to become mine, and no argument nor persuasion could induce her to disobey her father. We parted, I loving her more madly than ever, and with a heart full of bitterness for all the hollow world. I became moody, irascible, yet withal a hard student, sometimes giving freely of my means to others; at other times grudging even a kind word. I traveled a great deal, lived for self, shut out my heart from all kindly influences as far as possible, and was recklessly miserable. Of course, being a wealthy and eligible young man, there was many a young and beautiful girl who might have been mine had I taken the pains to ask her; but I had gotten soured against all but the one whom it was useless to love. In two years after we parted she married her present husband, Mr. Leonard. (Hope started in astonishment.) She has not led a happy life, poor girl, for he is not the man to make a woman happy. Little Violet reminded me of how she looked in the old school days. But to continue: Years rolled on, Mary was married, all hope of ever claiming her for mine had died out of my heart. I was weary of the world, weary of life, weary of everything, when Amelia crossed my path. I began to think that perhaps marriage might produce some change in my favor. I never thought to love again. Amelia was beautiful, fascinating, seemingly amiable, and in an evil moment I proposed to her. I found out my mistake when too late to retrieve it; yet, Hope, you know the skeleton in my closet, the Marah in my heart. Judge me kindly in your future thoughts."

"I am sorry for you, Mr. Gilbert ; yet I think if you will try to make the best of life it will be brighter to you."

They were at Mr. Watkins' gate now, and further conversation was stopped for the time, as Rodney would not accept Mr. Watkins' invitation to go in the house.

"As sure as you live," said Mrs. Watkins, "Miss Hope and Rodney Gilbert love each other, and why they can't make up their minds to marry is a mystery to me."

"And will remain so," said Mr. Watkins, dryly, "since neither one seems to wear their heart on their sleeve."

It had been Hope's intention to return home immediately after her school exhibition, but she was so wearied with her watchings at little Violet's bedside that she thought it best to remain a few days longer to rest ere attempting her homeward journey. Perhaps there was another reason for this. Who can willingly leave the neighborhood of a beloved object, even though every memory of the loved one is a pang? So unreasoning a passion is love. And yet Hope said to herself that she never wished to see Rodney Gilbert again, that every time that she saw him she was more unhappy.

A young doctor with whom she had just become acquainted had invited her to accompany him to church, and she wished to go once more before returning home—once more to the church where Rodney had carried her, where she had begun to think of him, where Herbert Ransom had preached his never-to-be-forgotten sermon, and life had seemed so bright to her. The landscape was lovely enough to her this morning, her escort polite and agreeable, yet everything seemed changed. Her spirit had lost its brightness and elasticity, sorrow oppressed her; yet none would have guessed it who looked upon her, so full of life and gladness did she seem. Rodney Gilbert was at church; a glance at the crowd before the door revealed his form and face, but Amelia was not present.

Like one in dream, Hope listened to the words of life, listened with a yearning to be benefited by them, yet with thoughts straying afar off—"What business had they in such a place?" Like one in a dream, Rodney Gilbert listened with a feeling in his heart that had the world been different with him he, too, might have been a better man; that even now a happy heart would make him a purer and more useful member of society. Ah! we speak of the ministry of sorrow, and truly it has its ministry; but is not joy an equally powerful agent of good? Is not sunshine as necessary as rain? Yes, we honestly believe that there is many an aching heart, embittered by sadness and neglect, which, under different influences, might have been a satisfied and happy one, receiving and diffusing joy. Should this not teach us to strive to make others happy? Preaching at last was over, and Hope descended the church steps. She saw nothing of her escort, and to her surprise Rodney Gilbert came up and bade her good morning, saying:

"Miss Hope, Dr. Jones was called off to see a very sick patient just after services began, and I offered to carry you home in his place, if you would accept of my services."

She said "certainly;" but her heart beat more rapidly, and the blood died her cheeks crimson, then retreated, leaving them as pale as ashes.

"There is a thunder-storm coming up," said Rodney; "I trust we may be able to get to your home before it reaches us."

He assisted her in his buggy and drove off rapidly, for the clouds were boiling up toward the zenith, overshadowing the crystal heavens, and ominous growls of thunder were already heard in the distance, with ever and anon a flash of lightning. There was little said by either; both were too intent in watching the gathering storm, which momentarily became blacker and blacker, while streaks of

zigzag lightning tore the gloomy clouds asunder and was succeeded by the most terrific thunder. Hope was constitutionally brave, yet she cowered a little amid the mad rage of the elements. The pines, swayed by the wind, seemed every moment just ready to fall upon them ; the rain poured down in blinding torrents, and all nature seemed suddenly thrown into maddening confusion. There was a terrific crash as the lightning struck a tree near by them ; the frightened horses plunged madly, broke from the buggy and were gone ; but Hope for one moment was stunned, unconscious of aught that had befallen them. When she became conscious she was in Rodney's arms ; she felt his kisses on her brow, heard herself called sweet, endearing names, and wished, ah ! how vainly, that she could die just then ! But she struggled to free herself, and he said :

"Miss Hope, you are too weak to walk without assistance ; there is a house not over two hundred yards from here ; if we can manage to get there we will be sheltered, at least, until the storm is over ; and I can then procure some way to see you home. They were grotesque-looking objects as slowly and with difficulty through the pouring flood they made their way to Mr. Wilson's small, but comfortable farm-house, where he and his wife lived alone. Both were drenched with rain, their shoes soaking and muddy, hair disheveled, and they looked like two outcasts ; but the hospitable farmer bade them welcome, and it was not many minutes before Rodney and Hope were arrayed in dry apparel and seated before a comfortable fire. Hope looked pretty but odd in Mrs. Wilson's old-time dress, as did Rodney in Mr. Wilson's, and both laughed merrily as they saw each other for the first time after their change of attire.

"I had half a mind to put on one of the old lady's caps," said Hope.

"I wish you had," said Rodney ; "I would like to see

the effect ;" then, lowering his voice, "Hope, I am glad of this storm ; we will be together a few hours, at any rate, and oh, it is Heaven, it is happiness to be with you, even for a little while. They were quite alone ; the old gentleman and lady were busy drying their clothes, and Rodney took advantage of their absence.

"Hope, darling, there is no use in a man plighting vows at the altar that he cannot keep. I don't love Amelia, I do love you entirely, perfectly. Why make our lives miserable, when they might be so happy ? Be mine ; I cannot live without you."

"You will have to," she said, quietly, with tears in her voice.

He knelt before her, caught her hands in his and exclaimed, impetuously :

"Hope, you never loved me, or you could not be so cruel !"

"Mr. Gilbert, I deemed you an honorable man—one who would not forget his plighted word to any woman. I admired you for your high sense of honor and duty."

"Hope !" he exclaimed, "look in my eyes and tell me, honestly, if you were engaged to a gentleman and should find that he loved another woman better, would you not rather release him from his troth to you than to marry him, knowing that his heart was another's ?"

"Yes," she replied, "I would thank him for telling me the truth, yet I would deem him false and fickle."

"As Amelia may do me," he replied. "It matters but little with me what anyone thinks besides yourself."

"And what will your mother think of you, Mr. Gilbert ?"

"Mother ! Ah ! Hope, mother wrecked my happiness once, she shall not do it again without just cause, dearly as I love her. If you were mine little would I care for what the world thought. You are my world."

"Rodney," said she, sadly, "it cannot be. If I really

thought you could never tear my image from your heart, that your life would be wrecked by my refusing to be your wife, I might agree to do so ; but I do not think that. Three months ago, before my ideas of duty were what they were, I might have accepted your proposal ; now I cannot ; we must live apart."

"And this is your decision, Hope ? Ah ! what avails the tenderest affection, the most idolatrous love, when a woman is obdurate ? My hopes, my heart, my happiness for this life are gone ! God grant in mercy that my span of life may not be long !"

"You talk wildly, Mr. Gilbert ; with your means you can do much in the world. If you really love me will you for my sake use them for the good of others ?"

"No, Hope, I cannot promise you this. If I marry Amelia I know she will be extravagant and I shall be an indulgent, if not a loving, husband. She shall never have cause to complain."

What made Hope love Rodney so madly, knowing his faults as she did ? seeing them, but as though she did not see them. Others seemed nobler and better ; for was not Rodney weak, even in his love for her, and full of faults ? Her love had begun in sympathy for his unhappiness, mingled with admiration for his talent ; it had been strengthened by the singular manner in which their acquaintanceship had progressed, and now his entire devotion to her had sealed her fate. She felt sure that from the ashes of this love no other would arise, that never again would the star of love rise on her pathway. Yet she was resolved to remain as she was, rather than tempt him to swerve from duty. She had felt how bitter it is to lose confidence in a beloved object, and though Amelia had once acted a false part by her, she determined to return good for evil. Notwithstanding the bitter pang of parting with Rodney, there was a sweet consciousness of doing

right in her heart, which helped her to endure the pain more bravely. And then, in some respects, it was not quite so bitter as to be jilted. She knew, though, that all through the coming years there would be haunting memories of Rodney; that his every tender word and tone would come to her recollection again and again; that the sad thought of "what might have been" would embitter all her future years. The short summer evening, made shorter by the gloom of the tempest, came to a close all too quickly for the lovers, who, though miserable together, were still loth to see the time pass by bringing around the inevitable hour of parting.

The next morning the earth was brighter than ever, and after bidding adieu to Mr. Wilson and his wife and thanking them for their generous hospitality, Rodney and Hope rode to Mrs. Watkins' in Mr. Wilson's buggy, drawn by one of his horses. Hope was destined to listen to pleadings that she found it almost impossible to resist, and sorry as she was to part with Rodney, she was glad when she reached Mr. Watkins'. They parted "forever," thought she to herself, as she watched him ride away. She locked her door, sank into a chair and gave vent to a flood of bitter tears. What, after all, if she had done wrong? What if she might have been destined to be the guiding star of Rodney's life to lead him to a brighter and better future?

"No, no; I cannot 'do evil that good may come.' It would be wrong in me to tempt Rodney to break his plighted troth. I must do right if it destroys my happiness."

Through the long, restless night she did not sleep, and when morning dawned she arose with a weight of sorrow on her heart and a sad look in the dark eyes. And with gloomy feelings she began her preparations for the homeward trip.

CHAPTER XVII.

"A buggy is at the gate, papa," said little Willie Watkins. "There are two ladies in it. I think Mrs. Leonard is one of them."

He was correct in his supposition. Mrs. Leonard and Miss Hunter were the visitors. The former lady was in deep mourning for her child. Her sable garments were extremely becoming to her, though it seemed to Hope that she had lost both flesh and color since the first time that she saw her. She greeted Mrs. Watkins and our heroine most affectionately, and seemed more cheerful than might have been expected under the circumstances.

"Her husband had gone off on a trip to Charlotte," she said, "and had taken her little son with him. Miss Hunter had agreed to stay with her during his absence, and they both thought it a good time to visit Mrs. Watkins, as they wished to see Miss Caldwell before her departure from the neighborhood."

Hope thanked them for their thoughtfulness, and assured them that she appreciated their visit very much. During the long hours of the forenoon conversation did not flag, but all seemed anxious that it should turn as little as possible on that which was still the subject of all their thoughts—the death of little Violet. But once did Mrs. Leonard speak particularly of her.

"I will never cease to be grateful to you, Miss Hope, for your kindness to my little one. She loved you dearly, and her memory will ever be inseparably connected with yourself in my heart. I could not now bear the thought of her having been roughly dealt with, and thank God, as much as I miss her, I have one comforting reflection—she can never undergo the trials of this life—its heart-aches and pangs ; she is sheltered from them forever."

Hope was too choked up with emotion to answer save with tears, and conversation drifted off to other subjects. Rodney Gilbert's name was spoken once in connection with his attention to Miss Montcalm.

"Rodney is an old friend of mine," remarked Mrs. Leonard, so calmly and coldly that Hope wondered if love could sometimes die a natural death. "We were school-mates, and he seemed a very promising young man; but of late his whole nature appears to be changed, with the exception of his generosity. He can never be otherwise than generous. I will always remember his kindness to us during Violet's illness, for I know it was he who sent her so many presents. I trust that if he marries it may have a good effect upon him—may sweeten a nature that was originally good, but is now from some cause embittered."

Hope gazed at Mrs. Leonard in astonishment. How could she bear to speak thus of one to whom she had once plighted her troth, whom in all probability she had fondly loved? Could it be that his memory had faded out of her heart entirely, and did Mr. Leonard now really occupy the niche once filled by him? It was an enigma to her; she could not puzzle it out. It seemed to her that a thousand years hence she would not wish to say much of Rodney in the presence of company. His memory was so sacred, and she felt, too, so guilty of loving him but too tenderly, that she could not bear to call his name, unless absolutely necessary to do so. After all, she reflected, different dispositions differ so widely that one cannot judge for another.

"You will not take another school here, I suppose?" said Mrs. Leonard to her, after a brief lull in the conversation.

"No ma'am, I hardly think I shall. It is quite probable that I will never teach in the country again. I wish to go

somewhere that I can pursue my own studies to advantage while I am instructing others. You know how hard it is to do that in the country ?”

“ Yes, indeed,” she and Miss Hunter remarked at once ; then the latter continued :

“ I know all about a country teacher’s life and will give you my whole history sometime, if you desire it ?”

“ That I do,” replied Hope ; “ but you will have to do so to-day or to-morrow, for I start home the day after.”

“ Miss Hope is an artist,” said Mrs. Watkins ; “ you should see some of her drawings and paintings before she packs them up.”

Accordingly, the next hour was occupied in looking at Hope’s treasured sketches—the work of her leisure hours. There were no master pieces among them, yet all indicated talent, all were above ordinary. The ladies were lavish in their praise of them.

“ I tell Miss Hope,” said Mrs. Watkins, “ that she has no business to teach school at all with such talent as she possesses, although I consider her a capital teacher too.”

“ Believe me,” replied Hope, “ that I consider a good teacher of more practical value than a fine artist ; but I fall as far short of my standard of teaching as of drawing or painting. I really think that to be an efficient teacher requires such a combination of qualities as is seldom found in one person. Just think of it ! A good teacher (I speak in the feminine gender) must be intelligent herself, and must also have the tact of imparting knowledge to others. She must be firm, yet mild, patient, yet not yielding ; must also be attractive to the pupils by a certain winsomeness of manner, which even the best of people do not always possess. She must be systematic and neat, and must set a good example in every respect to her pupils. She is their pattern in morals, in religion, in manners, in dress, in every respect. And when, by the most untiring industry, she

has managed to instil not only learning in the heads, but principles of right, of justice and of truth in the hearts of those entrusted to her charge, she must still be prepared to endure fault-finding and complaint from those who, having never themselves taught, are utterly incapable of appreciating the difficulties which beset a teacher. Even the intelligent patrons of a school (though this has not been my experience) may sometimes unnecessarily wound the feelings of a faithful, conscientious teacher, by thoughtless comments on her faults, as if anyone was destitute of them. So that I can truly exclaim, when I think of all this, “ ‘Who is sufficient for these things?’ ”

“ You are right, Miss Hope,” replied her companion ; “ I have taught for twelve years, and under almost every variety of circumstances, and I can say with truth, that not yet have I attained to my standard of a teacher.”

“ And has all of your work been in the country ? ” inquired Hope.

“ Yes, all of it. I may be almost silly in my attachment to the country, but while I could, in some respects, have enjoyed much greater advantages in the city, I could never relinquish the pleasures of a country life. The fresh air, the rural scenes, the songs of birds, the wild flowers growing along my path, the grand old woods, where I delight to rove—all of the beauties of nature to be enjoyed “ without money and without price,” are inexpressibly dear to me. So I have remained year after year, teaching first in one neighborhood, then in another, spending the best years of my life in the narrow routine of the school-room, and earning just enough money to keep me up respectably.”

“ Why,” inquired Hope, “ did you not remain in one place ? It seems to me that it would be much more agreeable.”

“ It certainly would, but it does not fall to the lot of the majority of teachers to stay in the same place for a long

time. Human nature craves a change. After a lapse of years some one is sure to find fault, and in such a case, though many of your patrons may like you, yet the disaffection of some, like the 'dead fly in the pot of ointment,' will render your life so unpleasant that you will gladly seek 'fresh fields and pastures new.' Still my life has not been one of constant change. I once taught three years at a place where I intended to establish a permanent school. To this end I worked hard. I spared neither time nor pains to accomplish it. I am not perfect, I know, yet lack of energy in the school-room is not one of my faults. I was unsuccessful. Some of my patrons clung to me and were never weary of sounding my praises ; but I gained the ill-will of others ; and some other circumstances acting against me, I resigned all thoughts of ever teaching long in one place. I have oftentimes seen the words of the Saviour fulfilled : 'Ye have labored and other men have entered into your labors.' It is hard to toil and see others eat the fruit of your work, to run and see others wear your crown ; yet this is often the lot of a country teacher. When a young man or young lady graduates at some noted college who thinks of the seed sown in the old country school-house ? No, all of the credit is apt to be awarded to those who put on the cap-stone of the educational edifice ; all of the praise is given to those who 'put on the finishing-touch.' In this, as in other things, I believe in justice being done to all parties. I think that all should share and share rightfully in the praise."

"I am afraid," said Hope, laughingly, "that could all young teachers hear you talk there would be a sad lack of instruction, more especially in the country."

"No danger of that," replied Miss Hunter ; "necessity, the grand lever which moves nearly all the world to labor, will ever fill the ranks of the teacher's army, and once there, ambition will impel many of them to strive to attain

to a high standard of teaching. Then, some look to a higher source for a reward of their labor. A faithful, conscientious nature will fill up the measure of its duty, whether the world approves or blames."

"Are you an orphan, Miss Hunter?" inquired her companion. They were alone now, Mrs. Watkins and Mrs. Leonard having gone out in the flower-yard.

"Yes, I have been an orphan since my seventeenth year. My father and mother were both killed by an accident on the railroad, and I had no one else to look to for assistance. Luckily for me, I was sufficiently well educated to teach, and from my youth the duties and responsibilities of the school-room have been mine. I grow very weary sometimes, the more so when I think that it is more than probable that I will spend the rest of my life as a teacher, yet I see so much that is disagreeable in every calling that I have learned to be reconciled to my lot. The greatest trial I have is that I really have no home. Boarding, as I do, I meet with much kindness. I make many friends, the children are almost always fond of me; yet, after all, I have no permanent abiding place. I spend my vacation among my numerous friends and acquaintances, by whom I am always cordially welcomed; yet, after all, I realize the truth of the words, 'There is no place like home.'"

Curiosity and the deep interest which she felt in her new friend impelled Hope to inquire:

"Do you never intend to marry, Miss Hunter? You might then have a home, perhaps a very happy one."

She was sorry a moment after that she had asked the question. A vivid blush stole over Miss Hunter's pale cheek; she seemed embarrassed, yet answered unhesitatingly:

"Not unless I can marry my ideal. I would no sooner marry now for a home nor for convenience than when I was just sixteen years old. Love and that alone will ever tempt

me to surrender my freedom, as poor a freedom as it is. I have loved but once in my life, and have long since flung away even the very memory of my idol, and have devoted myself entirely to the duties of my calling, and though I have trials and difficulties, and am destitute of a home, yet I see many married ladies with whom I would not exchange places. Believe me, that the silly fear of becoming an old maid has entailed a life-time of misery on many a woman, for "married and not mated" is the worst life in the world."

"Yes," responded Hope; "to marry in haste and repent at leisure," is worse than not to marry at all."

"I think, Miss Caldwell, that I might ask with more propriety why you do not marry? It is rumored that three of the most eligible young men around here have been, or are now, paying their addresses to you."

It was now Hope's turn to be embarrassed :

"That is a mistake, Miss Hunter; the young men who come here do so through courtesy, not through personal preference to me."

"Well, of course it is none of my business, but should Mr. Ransom ever address you I would say that no woman could do better than to marry him, for he is almost perfection."

"I can't bear your perfect beings," replied Hope, impetuously. "I would sooner love one nearer like myself, even though full of faults; yet," she rejoined, "I do like Mr. Ransom. He is one of my best friends."

"I can't think, then, why you discarded Mr. Gilbert," said Miss Hunter, mercilessly, though in a laughing manner; "for that, too, is the report; surely he has faults enough."

A hot flush mounted to Hope's very temples: "Who could have started such a report? Could Rodney have purposely left people under that impression merely to

shield her from the sneers of the world—merely to prevent the impression that she was jilted by him?" She believed this to be the case, and felt a thrill of gratitude warm her heart at the thought. The idea of either of the other gentlemen loving her seemed preposterous. As secluded as had been her former life, Hope Caldwell was not a woman who viewed every casual attention of a gentleman in a serious light, and it seemed too ridiculous for a moment's thought to regard Herbert Ransom or Daniel Young as lovers. It seemed very singular to her that on several occasions people had given her advice in regard to the young minister, when in truth he had never sought to win her affections—had been kind and pleasant, without even pretending to cherish more than friendly regard for her. She looked upon Mr. Ransom as a very dear friend; she regarded him as a man of superior piety and intelligence, but never for a moment had she even dreamed of the possibility of love between him and herself. Miss Hunter's words, she thought, had shown her how far gossip and the imagination of one's "dear five hundred friends" can transcend the bounds of truth. It did not once occur to her, as it might have done to other and vainer girls, that after all perhaps Herbert Ransom did love her, and was only withheld from addressing her by the belief that his suit would be rejected. This belief would have just now been quite correct, for their many rides and walks and talks had revealed to the young minister a disposition so noble and pure that he had at last fallen more in love than he had any idea of doing, though still without any thought of declaring himself to the object of his regard. He felt persuaded that Rodney Gilbert filled the highest niche in her heart, and he was unwilling to take a secondary place. So, all unconsciously to herself, she had won the affections of Herbert Ransom. In her perfect ignorance in regard to his real feelings for her, she disliked

very much to be teased about him, and tried to change the subject of conversation. Luckily for her, Miss Hunter's thoughts seemed to dwell more on school and on school life than on love or marriage. She entertained Hope by relating to her several little amusing episodes in her school life. She gave a humorous description of the stampede which took place in her school-room on one occasion, when a large but harmless snake was discovered coiled just above her head in the unceiled house.

"The children," she said, "as well as myself, were awfully frightened, until some of the bravest of the boys managed to get him down and kill him with a stick. When I noticed that it was a harmless species of snake I felt half regretful that I had permitted its destruction, yet so great is my horror of them that I believe it would throw me into a spasm should one accidentally fall upon me, even for a moment. At one place where I taught I used to amuse myself by watching the lizards, which crept in the house through crevices between the logs. I enjoyed seeing them catch flies. Then there was a bird which had built her nest on the inside of the roof, and I used to take pleasure in looking at her fly backwards and forwards to feed her little brood. And when the young birds were old enough to fly didn't the children feel interested in them ! I could not find it in my heart to allow them to be disturbed. It is my nature to love all harmless little animals, so that it was a pleasure to have them around me. However, I object to such a very open school-house in the winter. The health is endangered by draughts of air pouring in on teacher and pupils while they are sitting quite still, and more particularly if they are accustomed to snug, warm quarters at home. The change may produce sickness, if not death, in some cases. Yet all this discomfort, which is the result, not of selfishness, stinginess or meanness, but of pure neglect, might be remedied by the expenditure of a little

money and a few hour's work. In regard to water, there is sometimes a similar thoughtlessness. Sometimes the curbing of a well is decayed and needs to be replaced by a new one, or a well or spring is wofully in need of being cleaned out, but it is put off from day to day, and pupils and teachers have to drink bad water in consequence, and perhaps are made sick. Patrons, as a rule, do not visit the school-room very often. They seem to be contented if the children appear to be learning well, and do not inquire into all such little matters. Instructors dislike to find fault, more especially ladies, and the more intelligent and refined they are, the more is this liable to be the case, and seldom complain of any existing evil of this kind more than once or twice. If it is not remedied after that, they struggle on, putting up with inconveniences until the session is out. And yet the patrons of their school are perhaps just as kind-hearted, industrious, pleasant and clever people as one can find. This fault is but a 'little one,' yet it may cause most disastrous consequences. Just think of the trouble and expense that one single spell of sickness occasions, and it really seems incredible that people should not look out for their own health and that of their families in every possible way. Proper ventilation, but no draughts of air, a room sufficiently warmed and lighted, good, pure water, and a plenty of exercise out of doors, I regard as absolutely necessary to the health of pupils. Besides, I always notice to see that mine do not sit still with wet feet, as many children are apt to do. As a large, open fire-place generally falls to my lot at my school-house, I make them stay by that until their shoes are dried. Perhaps I am too careful, but I hold that a teacher is to some extent answerable for the manner, morals, health and learning of the scholars during the time which they are entrusted to his or her charge."

"I think so," said Hope; "but I do not believe that all teachers feel this way. No indeed! Some care only for the money which they expect to get at the termination of the school. I do not say 'earn,' for they do not earn it. No matter what may be the disadvantages which surround teachers, no matter if they are unknown and unappreciated, it is no less their duty to strive faithfully for the improvement of their scholars. Nothing can excuse them for neglecting their duties."

"I agree with you," replied her companion. "I think it right to do the best we can, no matter under what circumstances we may be placed."

"Well," said Miss Hunter, "I frankly own to you that my path is now a thorny one. I do not say that no ray of light penetrates the gloom, or anything of that kind. I am not miserable; yet I have passed the hey-day of my youth, its gorgeous visions have fled, I am homeless and poor. I am not even blessed with good, strong health. I cannot be happy as the world looks at happiness, yet I try to be content. I regard mine as a lofty mission. Next to parents, no one has a stronger influence over a child than a teacher. No profession has a wider sphere in its ultimate effects. Great and noble men and women can often recall their instructors to mind with sincerest gratitude. Some of the wisest and best of men in ancient days were teachers. I am proud of my profession, yet am fearful of disgracing it. Oh! could we realize what a charge is ours! The minds and hearts of those who as yet have their characters unformed put into our hands as clay in the hands of the sculptor, to be moulded by us. Yet comparatively few instructors realize it. A great many persons teach as a step to some other profession, some for money, others because solicited to do so, and not wishing to refuse; but how few because they love to teach? I think the very best of teachers love children. They can enter into their feel-

ings, can sympathize with their griefs, can even join their little sports, and children love and obey them all the better, provided a teacher understands the secret of gaining the affections of the little ones, and at the same time of losing none of their respect. Some of the greatest of men loved children dearly, and were delighted to share their innocent games, and our Saviour, with the shadow of death hanging over his devoted head, could yet lay aside all selfish thoughts and feelings 'to take young children in his arms and bless them.' But, Miss Hope, excuse me; I have said too much. Our conversation has certainly been a singular one for two ladies. You know single ladies, unless they belong to the 'strong minded' order, are thought to talk about very little beside dress and beaux. I am not 'strong minded,' yet my thoughts seem to run too much on my calling, and you, too, being a teacher, I have been betrayed into making quite a little speech."

"Well," replied Hope, "your one auditor has certainly paid good attention and been much edified. I trust it will help me if ever I teach again."

Mrs. Leonard and Mrs. Watkins now entered, bearing bouquets of lovely flowers, and the former lady informed Miss Hunter that it was about to time go, as Mr. Watkins was harnessing up their horse for them. Turning to Hope she said: "

"I trust you may return to this county soon, Miss Caldwell. I want you to visit me, too, when you do return. Come right along. You need not mind if my husband is a little rough at times. He is always clever and means well, but sometimes, when very much crossed, he may speak a little brusquely, as you once heard him."

"Hope looked at the lady in silent wonder. After all, was there any accounting for a woman's love? And could as intelligent a woman as Mrs. Leonard really imagine that she could make her husband appear in an amiable light to

other ladies ? It was a marvel to our heroine, yet at heart she thought the more of her friend for her loyalty to her husband. For no matter, she reflected, how wrong a husband may act, it best becomes a wife to be somewhat blind to his faults, and more especially before the world. And after all Mr. Leonard may have good qualities. Like many other women, Mrs. Leonard had wrecked her happiness by marrying an unworthy man, but unlike some, her destiny being fixed, she strove to make the best of it. Like the lovely vine twining around the old, decayed tree, and striving to hide its deformity from every eye, so did she strive to palliate her husband's every fault and endeavor to render his home a Paradise. Would she ever win him back to truth and righteousness ? would he withstand all the gentle influences of his home ? Oh ! thought Hope, if such a wife as she is, if such a child as Violet was cannot reclaim a man, then I believe that, like Saul of Tarsus, a miracle must be wrought in his favor ere he repent ; the light from Heaven's own gates must shine around him, and the voice of Jesus speak to him as it did to Saul. Figuratively she was doubtless correct in her views. But she did not express her thought in words. She simply promised Mrs. Leonard to visit her upon her return should she decide to do so. She gave both ladies a cordial invitation to visit her should they ever come to Tradeville. Then adieus were made, and Hope watched her friends until they were out of sight. With a heart saddened by the thoughts of the many partings she had to take, she went to her room, and there, upon the table, she for the first time noticed a magazine, which must have been placed there by one of the children. Mr. Watkins had just returned from the post-office and had brought it thence with him. As she turned over the leaves again did that familiar *nom-de-plume* greet her eye, and with a rapidly beating heart she read the following lines :

"MY FUTURE HOME."

"I'll have a home some day,
A home, but not with thee;
That sweetest of all earthly gifts
Will never be for me.
I'll have a home, and bright and fair
And gay that home will be.
Be bright with pictures and with flowers,
But not seem bright to me;
For there will not be there
My every joy to share;
And Oh, my love, when thou art gone,
I feel, indeed, as one alone.

A giddy throng shall dance around
As music breathes its strain,
And laughter seem to mock the fate
Of one who loves in vain;
And youthful forms in festal garb
Shall long the hours to chain,
Those fleeting hours, which fly so fast
And ne'er return again.
But when the world is brightest
And when my heart is lightest,
A yearning vain will come to me,
Oh! that my loved one here might be!

Oh! beautiful my bride shall be,
A queen to grace my home;
Her charms should stay my wandering feet
And bid me never roam.
Her form so light, her face so fair,
A heart of stone might melt,
Yet gazing in her sparkling eyes
Love still may be unfelt;
For even as she smiles on me
My heart will backward turn to thee
As Eve once turned her longing eyes
Back to the gates of Paradise.

Well, life is short, and bright or dark,
What difference at its close?
The rich man 'mid his treasures dies,

The beggar 'mid his woes.
The happiest or the saddest life
Is even at the tomb ;
One lays all earthly joys aside,
The other earthly gloom.
And all alike 'twill be to me
When once the pearly gates I see ;
For there, Oh ! there, I hope to meet
And walk with thee the golden street ! ”

The reader can well imagine the emotions excited in the mind of Hope by the perusal of the verses just quoted.

“ Alas ! ” she exclaimed, “ it seems so hard to dash the cup of happiness not only from one’s own lips, but also from those of another even dearer than yourself ! But Rodney is cruel in his love for me. Why will he not leave me alone to my fate ? Why ever call to mind the joys that I have lost ? Since we cannot marry, why cherish every regret, instead of banishing it from mind ? I wonder if, in the sight of God, it would not be less sinful to break his plighted word than to marry Amelia feeling, as he does now, that he cannot love her ? And yet, Oh ! merciful Father, I can call to mind a woman whom I saw in the days of my childhood who had lost her reason from having been jilted and who had afterwards to be shut up in the walls of an insane asylum on that account. Suppose the like were to happen to Amelia, could I ever be happy again ? No ! though she had no pity on me, I will spare her from even the possibility of such a fate ! ”

Thus Hope reasoned, but her mind was in almost a chaotic state, and she had to call into exercise all the powers of a will which was naturally very strong to subdue her emotions. It often happens that when our feelings of grief or anger are wrought up to their highest pitch there is no better safety-valve than to have the mind diverted from our woes to the utterly common-place or ridiculous. Perhaps the sympathy of the best friends the had on earth

would not have had so beneficial effect on Hope just now as did the unexpected visit of Mr. Fogymán, who thought "he'd call jest to tell Miss Hope good-bye." He had also brought her a parting gift, being no more nor less than a little old-timed looking basket made of willow. He had made it himself, he said, and thought maybe she'd prize it, it being home-made. Now, as Mr. Fogymán was a widower, a fact which was but lately revealed to Hope, it must be confessed that she rather hesitated in accepting a gift presented, too, in such a manner, and yet could she afford to make an enemy by refusing it? It seemed supremely ridiculous to her, but she thanked him, notwithstanding, saying as she did so, that she prized anything manufactured at home. This little remark opened the floodgates of Mr. Fogymán's eloquence :

"That is what I tell my children, Miss Hope ; anything manufactured at home is better than brought here and sold to us. Jest look at my clothes ! How long would Yankee goods stand like this suit has done ? My gals wove 'em right at home. Sal can weave five yards of cloth a day and cook three meals. We gets along all right," and lowering his voice a little : "I've got sev'ral thousand in the bank right now, but you're the only one that knows it. Ef I ever marry agin that goes to my wife. The chil'ren knows nothing about it !"

Hope was sitting out on the piazza, whither she had gone to read Rodney's mournful verses when Mr. Fogymán came, and she offered him a seat out there. Mrs. Watkins was in her own room, which opened upon the piazza, and Hope could imagine her amusement, as every word of this conversation fell upon her ears. How she wished that she would come in just now and give her some opportunity to escape. The conversation was getting altogether too confidential for her, and she fervently wished that she had not accepted the "old basket."

Mr. Fogyman continued: "I jest wish you could see my house, Miss Hope; it is nice enough for anybody, although I helped get out the timber myself, and nearly all of the furniture is home-made. I think that a woman could get along splendid with my children, 'specially ef she knew their dispositions. ("Mercy on us!" thought Hope; "will none of them ever come out here?") I liked your teachin' right well; the chil'ren all like you, too, 'tho I tells them it's heap more like playin' at school than it used to be."

"I suppose," said Hope, anxious to say anything to divert the subject of conversation, "that times were quite different when you were young?"

"Yes, indeed, though I'm not an old man, Miss Hope, not by any means. No! I'm jest in my prime; yet times hev changed even sence the war. I believe people was better during the war—more smarter like. Ef they had lived sence like they did then, they'd been rich folks now."

"I guess so," she replied; "but I would hate to live like they did then, even to get rich. I would like to dress in silks and satins and have diamonds at command, if I could."

We are afraid Hope said this more to be contrary to Mr. Fogyman than from any real love of splendor. The old man smiled what was meant to be a most benevolent, yet deprecating smile, as he said:

"Pride! all pride! Miss Hope! You know the Good Book tells us 'not to be high-minded.'"

"Yes; but people can be high-minded in calicoes or domestics as easily as in silks and satins."

"Well, I suppose you teach for your money, it comes easy to you, anyway, and you don't mind spending it; but folks as has to work hard for a livin' has to be more pertickler. ("It comes easy! I wonder, then," thought

she, "whose money comes hard?") But I 'spose you are not a goin' to teach here any longer, Miss Hope?"

"No, sir, I do not intend to."

"So I heerd; and so sez I to the gals maybe ef Miss Hope won't teach she'll agree to except another situation. Now, Miss Hope, I'm well able to take care of a wife, and seein' you are not used to hard work, my gals can take all the drudgery off your hands and you shall live like a lady; and—

At this moment Mr. Watkins appeared upon the scene, and thanking Heaven for the interruption, the girl hastily excused herself and went into Mrs. Watkins' room. That good lady had laughed until her eyes shone with tears.

"How unfortunate that Mr. Watkins should have come at such an inappropos time. We might have had a wedding before you left," she said, jestingly.

"Mrs. Watkins, I almost hate old Mr. Fogyman! I know I'm very wrong, but I can't help feeling so. And as for his old basket, I am going to give it back to him! It all came of my accepting that!"

"No, no, child, he has had this matter in view for some time, for he inquired of Mr. Watkins what chance he thought he stood. Don't be so troubled about it, Mr. Fogyman is a very respectable, if a very illiterate man, and is really all that he pretends to be."

"The idea of my being step-mother for Sal!" she exclaimed, betwixt laughter and tears; it is so ridiculous!"

"It is, indeed, yet it was the highest compliment that he could pay you, and really you are the first woman that he has ever paid any attention to since his wife's death."

"Please, Mrs. Watkins, don't let anyone else know about it," pleaded Hope. She thought of Rodney hearing of her droll admirer, and the reflection troubled her. She did not think that it proved how lovely and attractive she was to all. She felt mortified that Mr. Fogyman ever got

any chance to say so much to her. She felt almost humiliated at the idea of a man of his order paying his addresses to her. Yet, after all, she reflected, as ridiculous as he is, there may be worse people in fashionable society. He is honest, industrious and means well, and if he has not had advantages that is not his fault. So I will not trouble myself about it. And I will keep the basket in remembrance of my rustic lover and of my first school.

Mr. Fogyman never obtained the chance of finishing what he had to say to her in person, and being but an indifferent scribe, he concluded to let the matter drop. He had good sense enough to perceive that any farther attention from him would be disagreeable to our heroine. As he afterwards remarked to an intimate friend of his :

"I seed that 'my cake was all dough' there. Times has changed. Gals used to be glad of a chance of marryin' a man with a four-horse farm, a good house and money in bank ; but now ef theys poor as Job's turkey they hist up their noses unless a feller has book larnin'. But Miss Hope is a good teacher and I'll send my children to her ef she comes back. I haven't got nothin' agin her."

Mr. Fogyman's visit, however, had the effect of diverting the mind of our heroine from very painful thoughts and was a "blessing in disguise." Mr. and Mrs. Watkins and Robert King rallied her a good deal in regard to Mr. Fogyman, and their bantering helped to relieve her mind. Laughter is a good medicine when taken in moderation, and mirth is certainly conducive not only to good health, but also to that cheerful frame of mind which is of more value than "great riches."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The last day of Hope's stay at Mrs. Watkins' the house was crowded with visitors from early morn till dewy eve. First came Miss Rachel Tyler and her household. They made their appearance before the breakfast dishes were cleared away. They wished to tell Miss Hope good-bye, so Miss Rachel stated, and also to bring her a present which she hoped she wouldn't laugh at. The present was a very pretty bed-quilt, which Miss Rachel and the children had made and quilted with their own hands.

"Laugh at!" replied Hope; "that I will not, Miss Rachel. I will try to keep it as long as I live for your sake and in memory of my first school. Be assured I will never forget you or the children."

She made Miss Rachel very happy by the presentation of a little breakfast shawl, which she happened to have in her possession, but had never worn.

"Well, if that ain't pretty!" exclaimed the old lady and the children in unison, as they stroked the soft wool. I never seed nothing no prettier. I'll always think of you, Miss Hope, when I look at it, for it looks jest like you."

"Perhaps the garnet ribbon, which Hope was accustomed to wear, produced this illusion.

"'Pears to me I hate to give you up jest as bad as if you was kin to me. I never hated to part with nobody much worse."

Tears, real tears, were shining in Miss Rachel's eyes, and the teacher could not help feeling touched.

"Never mind," she replied; "we may all meet again. Perhaps I will visit you sometime. I expect to return here some day in the far future."

"You'd better have stayed when you was here - better have married Mr. Rodney Gilbert and been mistress of that fine house and plantation. I tell you what, Miss Hope, people thinks he's offish and selfish, but he ain't. Many a time he has sent a hand to help me in my crop when I was hard pressed, and he would have helped me a heap more ef I had let him. He was mighty kind to me once when I was sick, too ; sent me fruit and ice and nice things a plenty. Then he is so good to his mother. Many a whinin' hippercrit will be shet outen the golden city afore him, and I say that the woman who gits him will git a prize, and right sorry I am that you kicked him."

"That is a mistaken idea," said Hope ; "people always guess at such things without proof of it."

"Maybe so, child ; anyhow I don't expect you to tell me ; but you might go farther and do a heap worse."

Was it strange that Rodney's praises sounded so sweetly to Hope, coming even from Aunt Rachel ? It proved, after all, that her instincts were right, that there was something noble in her lover's nature, that her idol was not "common clay." The thought afforded her pleasure, yet it was pleasure closely allied to pain, for with all this nobility of character was he not lost to her forever, and that by her own act, though not by her own fault ? Miss Rachel continued :

"That young lady he's goin' to see is mighty pretty, Miss Hope, mighty pretty ; but she's no more like you than chalk is like cheese ; never any more speaks to a body than if they was niggers. I can't b'ar her ways. I'd be sorry to see Mr. Gilbert marry her. The colored gal what washes for her sez she's the hardest thing to please she ever seed, and then grinds her down to the last cent when she comes to pay her."

This subject was not agreeable to Hope, and she endeavored to change it.

"I suppose you will have a teacher here next session, Miss Rachel?"

"I hope so, for I want to keep the children straight on. They are in a fair way of learnin' now, and I would be willin' to live on bread and water to see them eddicated. I'll strain a p'int and hire help to let them go to school. I intend Octavia and Eugenia to take music lessons soon."

"That's right, give them a good chance and they'll pay you for all of your trouble, for they are well disposed children."

"Miss Hope, it makes my blood run cold to think of those children ever growin' up wrong. Now, there's Sam and Joe Liggins—mere boys like, yet they get drunk now; take their daddy's whiskey when he's asleep sometimes, and run the risk of a whippin'. Mr. Leonard's got a heap to answer for, Miss Hope, a heap! He's got a fine eddication and used to be rich, and men like Mr. Liggins looks up to him, and instid of settin' them a good example, thar he is a drinkin' himself and a gettin' him to buy that nasty stuff—pizen I calls it, what he sells; and as ef that wasn't enough, he gets them to play cards and wins their money. Oh! he's a bad man, Miss Hope, a mighty bad man! And sich a wife as he's got! An angel, I call her, for I sometimes thinks she would jest have to get wings and she would be let right in the pearly gates."

Never had the truth of what she had ever believed in regard to education impressed itself so forcibly upon the mind of our heroine as now, viz: that unless the heart—the moral nature, is trained along with the intellect, that the mere acquisition of knowledge may prove fully as much of a curse as a blessing. Here were two examples coming under her own observation—that of Miss Rachel, with no book learning, with no advantages whatever, who, with just a simple determination to do right, was leading a useful life in the community and training up her nieces and

nephew to be blessings to all around them ; while Mr. Leonard, with every gift that nature could afford, with every advantage that fortune could bestow, was no comfort to himself, to his wife, or to any one connected with him, and was a very great disadvantage to the community in which he resided, his talents rendering his influence far more fatal than if he were an ignorant man. Miss Rachel proceeded :

“ Sech carryin’ on at Mr. Liggins’ sometimes ! He beats his poor wife till the blood comes, and his boys too, and still they don’t get no better ; the worst boys I ever seed ! Ef I thought Adolphus would ever do so I would pray God to let him die now. I don’t preach much to them, though ; I jest tries to keep them out of bad company.”

“ Yes,” replied Hope ; “ that is where the ruin of a person generally begins. Bad habits are as contagious as small-pox or yellow fever, and really more to be dreaded. Keep the children in good company, give them useful books to read, let them go to Sunday School and church regularly, give them work enough to do, and also a plenty of amusements, and they are not apt to wander very far out of the right way. There are two things which tend to make bad men and women—one is the lack of work, the other of play. Employment of a useful nature keeps the mind busy, and the temptation to do wrong is lessened. But the mind cannot be always at work, and danger creeps in during the hours of relaxation, unless some innocent amusement be provided to keep that ever active brain employed. Many a child has been driven from home for lack of pleasant amusement there. I do not believe in always lecturing children. And in our judgment of others we must ever try to bear in mind the fact that there may be some excuse for their conduct. No matter how bad a person is, we may pity while we blame, for we cannot always tell all the causes which led to one’s downfall. In

my inmost heart I always sympathize with every one who is a wanderer from the right way."

"Miss Hope, I jest think you've got one of the kindest hearts I ever seed; who'd ever have thought of making excuses for people like you do?"

During all this conversation, which the reader must allow was very serious for a morning's call, Mrs. Watkins was out attending to domestic duties and the children had gone into the flower yard. She now entered the room, and after the usual civilities were passed and she and Miss Rachel had indulged in a short confab the latter arose to take her departure:

"I've got to go home," she said. "It's my ironin' day."

No persuasion could induce her to remain.

"May the Lord bless you," she said to Hope; "you deserve it if anybody does."

The children and herself bade the teacher and Mrs. Watkins a kind farewell, then clambered into the cart in which they had come and drove off. Hope watched them till out of sight, feeling that she had bid adieu to kind friends when she bade them good-bye. Scarcely had she folded up her quilt and put it away ere two other buggies drove up, one containing Mary and Hattie Stuart, the other Estelle Moran and Edgar Stuart. They all seemed in high spirits, and after the customary compliments of the day had been passed and they were seated in the parlor, Hattie entered into a glowing description of a ball which they had just attended, inquiring particularly "why Hope did not go."

"I did not wish to," was her reply. "I received my ticket several days ago, and a young friend of mine offered to see me there, but I did not care for it."

"Well, you missed a treat! Such a nice band of music as we had! And such a pleasant crowd!"

"Isn't Miss Montcalm lovely?" inquired Mary.

"She is, indeed," said Hattie ; "and Mr. Rodney Gilbert is so devoted !"

Hope understood the motive of these remarks, but sat seemingly as emotionless as a statue of marble. If she was stabbed to the heart by false friends she could at least prevent them from witnessing her agony ; she could "die and make no sign." Hattie and Mary had never forgiven her for appropriating Rodney's attention, even for a brief while, and they took this method of avenging a fancied wrong.

"Her father is very well off, I believe," remarked Edgar Stuart ; "and I think that she is an only child. Probably her prospective wealth is not the least of her charms. I think she is very pretty, but for my part would be afraid to trust her. She has a lot of deceit in her face."

Hope wondered if he said this because he thought it would please her, or was he a really good physiognomist?

"Edgar is always imagining that he can read people's dispositions in their faces!" exclaimed Mary ; "for my part, I think Miss Montcalm's expression is perfect."

"I don't," said the frank young man. "So far as lovely hair, regular features, exquisite complexion and a graceful form go, she is perfection itself ; but haughtiness and deceit are, to my thinking, plainly stamped upon her face. I'll agree that I know nothing about faces if such is not the case. Have you ever seen her, Miss Hope?"

"Yes," was her reply ; "I know her very well. We were schoolmates for a few months."

"Then you understand her nature ; you could let us into the secret if you had a mind to," said Edgar, laughingly ; "but of course we would not expect it of you."

"No ; if I knew anything disparaging of her I would not take the pains to trumpet it abroad ; but I liked her very much during our school life."

Here was a mystery for the girls ! Amelia and Hope

schoolmates! yet, to their certain knowledge, no visits had been exchanged between them! What could be the cause? Rodney Gilbert, without a doubt! jealousy and nothing else! Hope, too, puzzled them. She seemed so composed and cool while they were talking about her rival, so indifferent to the subject as to perplex them very much. And although in some respects they really liked her and would have befriended her, yet, with strange inconsistency, they would just now have gloried in seeing her writhe under the tortures of jealousy—would have spared her no pang. They felt that it would be a justifiable revenge for the suffering inflicted on them by Rodney's former attention to her. Of so strange a nature is human friendship in some instances! Then, too, not only Rodney, but most of the other eligible young men around paid her considerable attention, and envy had taken such full possession of their hearts as to leave but little room for true love to dwell there. Estelle was different in her conduct toward our heroine. She did not torment herself or others by idle jealousy. Rodney Gilbert and Amelia Montcalm seemed interesting topics of conversation to the two sisters. They described her ball dress to our heroine:

"It was a pink silk," said Mary, "with an overdress of lace, looped up with lilies of the valley."

"And weren't those pearls exquisite?" said Hattie. Miss Hope, she wore pearl ornaments in her golden hair and on her snow-white neck and wrists, and it did seem to me that an angel could not be more beautiful."

"She is, indeed, a most charming girl," replied Hope. I really consider her nearer to perfection in face and figure than anyone I ever saw. She and Mr. Gilbert will make a handsome couple."

"I don't think him handsome," said Hattie; "his expression is too sour."

Hope was forcibly reminded of the fable of "The Fox

and the Grapes," but said nothing. After all, were such trifling speeches worth reply? Yet, as the largest and strongest animals can be stung well nigh to madness by small insects, so can the noblest natures sometimes be tortured almost to desperation by very insignificant people. Hattie continued after a moment's pause:

"Mr. Gilbert may have been cross because his sweetheart was dancing so much with Dr. Jones. She waltzes exquisitely, and so does the doctor, and I suppose that Mr. Gilbert did not fancy their waltzing together so much. At least people thought so. But I think Miss Amelia pretty independent."

Edgar Stuart was far better natured than his girl cousins. He had been penetrating enough to notice that Rodney Gilbert cherished more than ordinary regard for Hope, and thought, too, that she was by no means indifferent to him, and it had rather puzzled him when affairs terminated as they had. Still he felt intuitively that this conversation was extremely disagreeable to her, and endeavored to change it.

"Miss Hope, you cannot tell how we all will miss you when you leave this county. I have really enjoyed your company very much."

"I have certainly had a pleasant time since I came here," she responded; and shall ever cherish in grateful remembrance my many good friends here. I could not have met with more kindness and hospitality anywhere."

"I am delighted that you fancy our part of the county so well, and wish that you would take another school here."

"I do not expect to return next session. I shall try to get a situation in the city, where I can pursue my own studies to advantage. I cannot do that in the country."

"No, I presume not, but I imagine that country life is really more enjoyable. If you want to have a good time

in a social way, a pleasant country neighborhood is the place for it. But I think that Hattie and Mary have a notion to exchange country for town life." And he began to tease his cousins and Estelle unmercifully. He related several little incidents connected with the ball. Hattie and Mary, he declared, had completely charmed two very fascinating young students from the University—Mr. Percy St. Clair and Mr. Albert Hamilton. The last we saw of them they were waving their handkerchiefs as the train sped by, while Mary and Hattie were stifling back the tears that came in their eyes, but which they would not permit to fall."

"For shame, Edgar, for making such a draft upon your imagination! I fear your imaginative power will fail you if you do not cease from drawing upon it so heavily!"

"No danger of that," he replied; "I think my supply is inexhaustible."

"But, Miss Hope," said the two girls, "you should have seen him at the ball talking to a girl whom no other gentleman seemed to love to talk to—she was so ugly."

"Hattie! Mary! you are carrying jesting too far now! That young lady has no superior in conversational power, and is, to my thinking, extremely interesting, and gentlemen do not value her at her true worth simply because she is so modest and retiring that they think her destitute of spirit and liveliness."

"Hope noticed the sudden color that mounted to cheek and brow as he spoke, and when, two years after this conversation she heard of his marriage to this same lady, she was not at all surprised. The girls laughed teasingly:

"Just listen at him now! taking Mary Conway's part already!"

The reader has perhaps already grown tired of this nonsensical talk. Though all of the girls had had good advantages, they seemed to love to talk nonsense on this

particular day, and this was but a fair specimen of the greater part of their conversation on this occasion. There was one thing, however, which could be said in their favor : not one of them indulged in slang. Their chat was principally of the ball, of the appearance of the girls, their dress, etc., of how much they enjoyed themselves and of how they hoped to have equally as gay a time at no distant period. Then came in profuse expressions of regret that Hope was about to leave the neighborhood with that drop of wormwood which Mary and Hattie were careful to mingle with the honey of their converse in the shape of a suggestion "that she ought to stay till the wedding of Mr. Rodney Gilbert."

"I might remain and not get a ticket to it," she replied, with a smile. "When does the happy event take place?"

"Oh, it is not exactly known ; sometime soon, I suppose."

Edward Stuart looked at Hope admiringly, and felt provoked with Hattie and Mary.

"How little and detestable some women can be in their spite," was his thought ; then he remarked : "Miss Hope, these two girls are nearly dying of envy. Miss Amelia Montcalm and Mr. Rodney Gilbert are their main topic of conversation. I think the two haunt their very dreams."

This home-thrust had the effect of embarrassing the sisters very much, and it completely silenced them so far as any farther mention of Rodney or Amelia was concerned. It was a rough but a deserved rebuke. As much as Hope loved the company of friends, she felt unspeakably relieved when the four took their departure, for the Stuart girls had not only destroyed the day's pleasure for her, but they had recalled thoughts which she was ever striving to banish from her mind, and which tended to render her very unhappy. After they had gone she went to her room and for sometime sat absorbed in painful

meditation. It was not so much of her lover as of human frailty and of the falsehood of human friendship in many instances: "What had she done that these girls should treat her in this manner? Could she help being as she was, attractive to one whom they had tried in vain to captivate? Had she not shunned his society partly on this very account? And yet they seemed to take delight in saying things to wound her, in continually reminding her that another woman had replaced her in his affections! Alas! she groaned to herself, I am tempted sometimes to say with the poet:

"There's nothing true but Heaven."

And yet have I not good friends? Are not Mrs. Watkins and her husband, Mr. Herbert Ransom, Mrs. Leonard, and a host of others, good, kind, true friends? Shall I then lose confidence in human nature on account of the spiteful chat of two envious girls? No, I will not. I will be more sensible than that."

Later in the evening Mr. Daniel Young made his appearance. Hope had not seen him for sometime. He had of late been more distant than during the first of their acquaintanceship; but this evening he was particularly cordial and interesting. He had recently returned from a trip to the mountains, and gave our heroine a glowing account of all that he saw during his sojourn there. "The Land of the Sky" lost none of its interest to her from his vivid portrayal of its beauty, and she heaved a sigh of regret at the thought that she and her mother were unable to spend the remainder of the summer there instead of at their lowly home in Tradeville.

"Poverty is a bitter thing," was her unspoken thought; but she strove to repress it.

Mr. Young talked on. She was a good listener, and he took pleasure in conversing with her mainly on this

account. But she was not wholly silent. "A very interesting conversationalist," Mr. Young had often styled her. The long hours spent at her own home in the society of the wisest and best men and women of all ages, speaking to her through printed pages" the intimate converse she had held with all that was pure, elevating and lovely in character, her intense love of the beautiful and her superiority to all the little spite and rancor which sometimes mar the effect of the most attractive face and figure, rendered her an unusually pleasant companion. Add to this a very independent nature, and the reader need not be deeply surprised when informed that Daniel Young, a favored child of fortune, a man of the world, seemingly proof to all female charms, had at last, in spite of apparent indifference, fallen as deeply in love with Hope Caldwell as it was his nature to be with anyone. The revelation came like a thunderbolt to her. He had taken her to ride on this the last evening of her stay in the neighborhood, and had conversed on many subjects in his own attractive style, keeping her mind diverted from bitter thoughts, and rendering the time passed in his company extremely agreeable. The horse's head was turned homeward ere he made any reference to the subject uppermost in his mind. Without preface or warning in any way, in plain, unmistakable terms and in few words, he told her of his love and of his wish for her to marry him. It did not seem at all like Daniel Young. There was no doubting his sincerity in regard to what he declared. There was a tremor in his voice which betokened his emotion; his every look betrayed him. Hope did not question his truth. But she felt bewildered. It was so unexpected. For a time she said nothing, surprise had seemingly deprived her of speech.

"Am I to have my answer now or to wait for it, or does your silence give assent, Miss Hope?"

"You are so sudden ; I was not expecting such a thing," she said ; "give me time to think."

Then there was silence for sometime, a most embarrassing silence. Away down in the cool, green forest was heard the notes of a far-off bird, the sunbeams were gilding the tree-tops, the soft, balmy breeze was stealing to them with refreshment on its wings ; there seemed a hush on every surrounding. In that brief while our heroine thought deeply, as women are bound to think at such times. On her decision to the question just put to her might depend her future joy or woe. She reflected on her own poverty and that of her mother, on her ambitious dreams, whose fulfillment that poverty seemed destined to prevent, on her future as a single girl, working out her own destiny, exposed to all the difficulties which a lone and dependent woman is compelled to encounter, and doomed, too, to see her mother suffering for lack of comforts to which she had once been accustomed ; this picture presented itself to her view on the one hand ; on the other was a life of ease and comfort, with a husband whom almost any girl might be proud to claim, a well educated, well-bred gentleman, easy in manner and interesting in conversation, who was fully able to gratify her every wish and to help her to the fulfillment of every ambitious dream. How happy such a marriage would render her beloved mother ! Ought she not for that mother's sake accept this offer ? But even as she considered the question the thought came to her : "Oh, that Rodney had been free to win my hand ! Oh, that he were here even now ! and with that name the full tide of recollection swept away every other consideration, and she felt that it would be wronging any man to marry him with her heart straying after that lost love. She could not bind herself with any fetters save those welded by purest, deepest affection. Her decision made, she did not hesitate to let it be known :

"I am very sorry, Mr. Young—sorry that you have ever mentioned this subject, and feel deeply regretful that I am compelled to decline your kind offer. It would not be doing you justice to give you my hand without my heart."

"Can you not defer your refusal awhile? Can you not learn to love me?" he asked, in pleading tones. "I know of late that I have seemed somewhat indifferent to you; but it has been purely because I wished to conquer my affection for you. I was afraid my suit would be useless and strove against my love; but finding that effort was vain, I determined to tell you all. Let me prove to you how dearly I love you, and my love may yet meet with a return. I will spend my life in your service. You shall have every wish fulfilled if you consent to be mine."

She shook her head. "It cannot be, Mr. Young; let us dismiss the subject."

When she saw his downcast expression as she spoke these words, her heart was moved to tenderest pity; but she could not reverse her decision. When he bade her good-bye he requested permission to correspond with her, but this she would not grant, and so he left very much depressed at the unsuccessful issue of his suit. Some women would have gloried in the thought of this conquest; but a feeling much more of sorrow than of triumph filled the heart of our heroine as she saw him ride away that evening.

"Mine is a sad destiny," she complained to herself. "Something ever deprives me of the love which I prize, while that which I care not for is laid at my feet."

Herbert Ransom's company during the remainder of the summer evening was very pleasurable to her, yet had he revealed to her what was in his heart it would, if possible, have surprised her more than Daniel Young's declaration. A hundred times in the course of his visit did the temptation come to him to declare himself, at all hazards, and a

hundred times did he battle with that temptation. He felt quite sure that Rodney occupied the highest niche in her heart, and was afraid that that thought would destroy his happiness, even were he fortunate enough to win her. No other man would ever be to her what Rodney was. Through her whole life she would have tender thoughts of him, no matter whom she might marry. So thought Herbert, and believing thus he had fully resolved never to address Hope. This last evening tried that resolution to the utmost. She was prettier than he had ever seen her. Her white dress, set off by pink ribbon at the throat and on the sleeves, was becoming to her, and in her hair was a moss rosebud. Her cheeks were flushed, and as she laughed and talked with him the bright expression of her countenance was very charming. To him she was the ideal of whom he had dreamed, the embodiment of all that he considered most lovely. Yet he was perhaps to take his last look of her this evening.

"I shall miss you very much, Miss Hope, more than you ever dreamed of," he said.

"I am so glad!" she exclaimed.

"Glad! and why?" he inquired, the light of hope leaping to his eyes for one moment, and his heart beating wildly.

"Because," she rejoined, "I am so selfish as to be willing that others suffer pain sooner than that I should be forgotten."

"You will be long remembered about here. Your friends will not easily let your memory die. But I wish to keep it alive in a more substantial way. Will you not correspond with me?"

She gave her assent.

"Letters from absent friends are a very great consolation, and Hope, you may write to me as you would to a brother, will you not? If in trouble in any way and I can be of service to you, do not scruple to let me know."

"You are very kind," she murmured ; "the very kindest friend I have in the world except mother."

"And," said he, that affection which he could not wholly restrain from showing beaming in his eyes, "I want to see my little friend very, very happy."

His kindness completely overcame her usual self-control. The long repressed tide of emotion swept away by his gentle sympathy, she exclaimed :

"Oh ! Mr. Ransom, I wish that I could be happy ! I think it is a duty I owe to my God ! I try to be, but I am so far from it ! All my life long I have striven after some object which has ever eluded my grasp ; my plans have been utterly thwarted, and my life, so far, is a complete failure !"

"Your life a failure ! No, no, Miss Hope, my dear friend, it is not a failure ! True, you may not, so far, have done much in the world, but during all these years you have been storing up knowledge—have been preparing yourself for a noble mission. That you may not be fortunate, as the world counts fortune, I acknowledge ; but is it not better to be noble, good and true, than just simply to succeed in one's plans, whether they be right or wrong ? Does not God know all of our ways, and will He not order them aright if we will trust in Him ?"

"Yes," she replied ; "but it is sometimes very bitter to be thwarted in every wish, to have all of our fond expectations blasted."

"Your name is Hope, and 'hope is an anchor to the soul ;' will you ever remember that, and try to believe that, however dark to-day is, that the future may yet have joy in store for you ?"

"I will try," was her reply ; "but do you know, Mr. Ransom, that I always imagine that you find it so easy to do right that you cannot imagine how difficult a thing it is for one like myself ?"

"That is a mistaken idea. My life is one of continual conflict. I have 'to fight and keep my body under subjection,' just as better men than I have done. And I have my troubles and heartaches, too; but I can then go to Jesus. I have no earthly friend in whom I could confide them all."

"Not even in me?" she inquired.

"Not even in you, my dear little friend, because it might make you unhappy. I could trust you, I do trust you; but you shall never be less happy on my account."

It all seemed so strange to Hope. She had ever deemed Herbert a being who scarcely knew the meaning of temptation; who was of so pure and noble a nature that he was not tried as people generally are, and therefore could not sympathize with them. She now ascertained how far she was from the truth. Yet somehow she felt a kindlier, nearer feeling for him than she had ever done before.

"God bless you!" he exclaimed, as he bade her good-bye. "May you be very, very happy!"

She watched him as he rode away in the moonlight, little dreaming of his secret, yet feeling very sad at the thought of so many partings. And the morrow brought her others almost as sad as she started on her homeward trip.

CHAPTER XIX.

It may well be supposed that as vain and selfish a girl as Amelia would be suspicious and jealous of Rodney's attentions to any woman, and more especially if that

woman was one whom she had treated as she had done Hope, and who, judging by herself, she thought would only be too glad of a chance to retaliate. She had noticed the peculiar expression of her lover's face whenever Hope was mentioned ; had observed the interest he seemed to take in her, and wisely surmised that he cherished for her more than ordinary regard. He himself told her of his escorting Hope home from little Violet's funeral, and Dr. Jones informed her that Rodney saw her home from church in his place. She was on fire with indignation ; she could scarcely control her feelings within the bounds of ordinary politeness before her guests, and Rodney's prolonged absence aroused her naturally jealous disposition almost to phrenzy. She really had learned to care more for her betrothed than for any of her other admirers, principally because he seemed so independent towards her, and this preference for another woman set her almost in a fury. When Rodney returned, the evening after the storm, to his mother's, she absented herself from the parlor for several hours, thinking to pique him by her show of indifference. But, to tell the truth, he felt rather relieved than otherwise. Had he consulted his own inclination he would have really been happier just now to be free from an engagement with anyone ; but he did not wish to wreck Amelia's happiness unless he could make his own and Hope's by the sacrifice. He determined if the latter would not marry him to keep his engagement with his betrothed and make the best of it. He would be miserable, he concluded, whether married or single, so it did not much matter. The absence of his affianced for a few hours was rather pleasant to him, for his thoughts were so full of his lost love that it cost him an effort to be agreeable to anyone. Instead of the reproach which she expected for her seeming indifference, when at last she did make her appearance, Rodney made no inquiry whatever concerning her prolonged stay out of his com-

pany, and this neglect stung her deeply. She was in no amiable humor. Her vanity was wounded—incurably wounded; and after several ineffectual attempts to appear her natural self, she at last abruptly inquired:

“Why did you not come yesterday, Rodney?”

“How could I,” he replied, “in such a storm?”

“Where did you go?” she inquired.

“To a farmer’s house—a Mr. Wilson. I had to escort Miss Hope Caldwell home, and we were compelled to seek shelter from the storm at Mr. Wilson’s.”

“That is why you stayed so late this morning,” she said, with a mocking laugh. “Well, Hope is right good-looking, but she has had a bitter experience. A girl who has been jilted never loves the same again.”

“Jilted! Has Miss Caldwell ever been jilted?”

“Yes, indeed,” was her reply; “she was engaged to a very handsome young fellow named Robert St. George. Unluckily for her I visited her that summer, and what does her betrothed do but turn dunce and desert his affianced wife for me. Honestly, I never encouraged him, and had to discard him at last; and so, like the dog in the fable, he lost both substance and shadow.”

“Merciful Heaven!” thought Rodney; “is there really a Nemesis upon earth? I could almost think so, and Hope is but little inferior to an angel. What other woman would not have exulted in the thought of triumphing over a rival who wrought such injury to her happiness? He did not fully believe what Amelia said about not encouraging Robert; he had seen too much of her coquetry for that; but he did not dream that she had done so much to entrap her luckless victim. In vain he strove to be agreeable to his betrothed. His thoughts were always straying after Hope. She seemed to him so noble, so pure, so far above all the rest of the world. He began to think that it would be a sin to marry another woman, loving her as he

did, for he felt sure that he could never drive her memory from his mind. Luckily Amelia's jealousy and wounded self-love saved him from the horror of a union with her, as well as from the dishonor of forfeiting his word to a lady. With an intention of piquing him, and thus rendering him more devoted to her, she commenced a flirtation with Dr. Jones. Rodney tacitly encouraged it, and stung to the heart by his indifference, in a fit of jealous rage she at last wrote him a letter dissolving the engagement existing between them. Instead of the pleadings to be reinstated in her favor, which her unlimited power over the hearts of many led her to hope even from him, she received the following lines in reply :

"DEAR MISS AMELIA : - Your letter is to hand. I give you back the freedom you covet and give it most cheerfully, as only a regard for your feelings prevented me from dissolving our engagement before. I have found out my own heart more perfectly since we were betrothed, and am convinced that I can love another better, though trusting that we may continue the best of friends. With kind regards,

Yours, very truly,

"RODNEY GILBERT."

"Fairy Dell, June 16th, 1874."

"Foiled ! foiled !" exclaimed Amelia to herself, when she read this missive. "I will lose the only chance I ever scared for, and Hope alone is to blame for it ! Truly she is avenged now !"

As for Rodney, he was overjoyed at the turn which affairs had taken. That day he wrote a letter to Hope telling her all, and beseeching her to give him permission to visit her at once. He renewed his protestations of undying attachment for her, and besought her to be obdurate no longer, but to make up her mind to become his wife at no very distant period. But days, weeks and months went by and no reply came. Weary and disheartened, he

resolved to travel. Change of scene might perhaps benefit him. A trip to the far West was decided upon.

"It may do you good, my son," said his mother, whom he had never made his confidant in regard to his affection for Hope, "you look wretched. Amelia will have much to answer for."

He turned away with a bitter smile. It seemed so ridiculous to regard her as the author of his misery. Yet what more natural than such a conclusion?

CHAPTER XX.

Though not compelled to do so, our heroine decided to take the busy town of Wilmington on her homeward route. She wished to make some purchases for her mother, and besides had a desire to see the place, which, though not very far from her home, she had never visited. With the firmness which was a part of her disposition she resolved to bury the past, as far as possible, to cast all useless regrets aside and to pursue the path of duty unflinchingly. As she had taken up the profession of a teacher she determined to fit herself for it, to strive every year to become more capable of instructing the young, and at the same time she did not give up her cherished idea of becoming an artist at some period of her life. Just now she found that her salary was not sufficient to justify her to incur all the expenses necessary for her to take lessons in drawing or painting, situated as she was. It then occurred to her that as she had already begun as a teacher she might possibly secure a position in a college and have instruction in her favorite studies in part payment for her services. This idea pleased her very much, and as she watched the

fleeting panorama without while she sat at the car window, her reflections were not all tinged with gloom, although a pang shot through her heart whenever she thought of Rodney, for she felt that neither time, distance nor absence could ever eradicate his image from her memory. She strove, though, to think on her blessings, on her exemption from physical pain, on her youth, on the kindness received from friends, on the joy of her mother at seeing her again, and she felt thankful to God for all of His mercies. Who, after all, can truly say that they have no cause to be grateful? Her fellow passengers were not numerous, yet even some of them were well calculated to teach her a lesson of gratitude. An old man sat immediately in front of her, who seemed tottering on the very verge of the grave, and the hacking cough he had betokened but too truly that even the few days remaining to him would not be exempt from pain and weariness. A mother with a sick infant lying on a pillow in her lap occupied another seat, her pale, anxious features a sure index to her state, both of mind and body. A young man who walked on crutches was another occupant of the car. Toward all these Hope felt an unbidden sympathy spring up in her breast, and involuntarily contrasted her condition with that of each of them, and found the balance of blessings largely in her favor. It was a noisy, busy crowd that surrounded the depot at Wilmington, and she was glad to be well away from it in a hack en route to her boarding-house. Once there she felt more at ease. It was kept by a lady, whose kind, motherly ways made Hope feel at home in a remarkably short time. The scene without was pleasing to her eyes, unaccustomed as she was to the city. The lighted streets and shops, the crowds on the sidewalks, the noisy vehicles forever passing, had all the charm of novelty for her. She had stayed at home so closely, had seen so little of the great world. She did not

fall asleep until a late hour that night, but sat at her window, listening to the practice of some amateur musicians. The next morning she amused herself watching the scene below her window. Carts were backed up against the sidewalk filled with early fruits, vegetables, poultry, eggs, etc., and around these were gathered an eager, curious, trafficking crowd. Men and women, both white and colored, were coming and going with market baskets on their arms, either filled or destined to be filled with the contents of the aforesaid carts. The purchasers examined the articles sold "with a critic's eye," taking them in their hands and striving to get as much value for as little money as they could, while the same spirit was manifest in the sellers of getting as much as possible for their goods. For fully an hour Hope watched them, until the breakfast bell called her from the window. After breakfast she walked down the street to do some shopping. The scene was a lively one on this especial occasion. It was a holiday—the anniversary of the nation's independence, and most of the stores would be closed after the early morning, and the hurrying crowd on the sidewalks seemed disposed to make the best of the day. Many of them were off for an excursion down the river. The large steamer near the wharf was already in waiting for them, and as, with eager looks and impatient feet they hurried thither, they formed an interesting spectacle to our country friend. Vehicles laden with merry parties were dashing by, going out in the country to eat their lunch among the beauties of nature. The river rippled and glittered in the sunlight, the little boats skimmed the silvery water like things of life, the vessels, with their tall masts motionless against the background of the deep blue sky, reminded Hope of pictures she had seen, and every surrounding filled her excitable temperament with pleasure. Her vivid imagination invested every object with a peculiar charm. "Here are vessels,"

she thought to herself, "from far distant lands, which probably I shall never see. Could they speak what tales they would tell, what recitals of danger and distress, yet of storms outridden at last, and of ports safely gained! Can I not learn a useful lesson from them—a lesson to give me faith and courage to encounter the trials of life, knowing that after all is over I shall anchor safely at last in the wished-for haven?" The sailors climbing the lofty masts enlisted her warmest sympathy. "Poor fellows!" she thought, "rough, reckless, sinful, uncared for as they are, yet how necessary to the well-being of the world are they! for where would art, science, progress, education—where would religion itself be without the aid of the common sailor in diffusing them?" Thus she reflected as from a little rise she watched the busy scene at the river.

Hope's trip home was almost devoid of interest for the remainder of the way. The captain of the boat on which she travelled was kind and gentlemanly, her cabin reasonably comfortable, and the thought of seeing her mother would have rendered her indifferent to her surroundings had such not been the case. She found everything at home jogging along as usual, and for a few days the intense joy of being once more there and with her truest earthly friend, stifled the regretful feelings which would obtrude upon her at times, in spite of her every effort to repress them. But as weeks elapsed and her life settled into the old grooves once more, the thought of Rodney Gilbert came back. She did not give way to melancholy, she was too brave and strong for that; but her earthly joy had fled. Her lover haunted even her dreams; with him "the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose;" without him the world was an utter blank, so far as happiness, but not so far as duty was concerned. Though her heart ached with the burden of its loneliness, she went steadily on in her dreary path, neglecting no task that devolved upon

her, avoiding no cross that God saw fit to lay upon her shoulders. Neither did she forget her plans for the future. She secured a position in a high school to be opened in the fall, and already saw a prospect of realizing her youthful dreams, when, as if God intended to try her in the very furnace of affliction, Mrs. Caldwell was taken very ill and for months hovered on the verge of the grave. Of course she had to resign her place, and when again she had the happiness of beholding her mother restored to health she saw no prospect of at once securing such a situation as she desired. The weeks and months dragged along, and sometimes it seemed to her that she could not live without seeing Rodney or hearing from him. Herbert Ransom wrote to her occasionally, and once mentioned his friend, stating that he had gone off to California. That was all the tidings of him she had ever gained. One day, several months after her return home, she called at the postoffice as she was on her way to visit a sick neighbor :

"Miss Hope," said the postmaster, "you must really excuse me, but here is a letter for you which, by some unaccountable means, got misplaced several months ago, and has just come to light. I hope it is not of much importance."

She glanced at the superscription ; her face turned red and pale by turns ; she murmured some inarticulate words and left the store. The letter was the one which we have already referred to, from Rodney, informing her of his being honorably free from the ties which bound him to Amelia, and of his wish for her to become his wife at an early period. It was dated just three weeks from the time when she had left Mr. Watkins'. Once to herself she tore open the envelope, devoured the contents of the missive, then burst into a flood of bitter tears :

"Too late ! too late !" How mournfully did these words ring in her ears ! "Oh, merciful Heaven !" she exclaimed,

“how sad to think of a lifetime of happiness flung away by one act of carelessness ! It would not do to write to Rodney now ; he might be married or dead, and even were he alive and single, she did not know where to direct her letter. She had deemed herself unhappy before, but never had she suffered such exquisite mental anguish as now. She was at least calmly despairing before ; now the conflict between hope and fear was almost more than she could bear. She and Herbert still corresponded. She determined to make some casual inquiry after Rodney. She did so, and after sometime received an answer informing her that Rodney was still in the West and was unmarried. Then she resolved to fold her hands and trust in God for the future. Soon after receiving her letter from Herbert she had occasion to visit the town of which we have already spoken. While she was there a distinguished gentleman was to lecture, and a young lawyer of her acquaintance offered to escort her to the hall where the lecture was to come off. While they were there a gentleman and lady came up the aisle and took the seat in front of her. One glance at the gentleman's face and she recognized Rodney ! Her heart seemed to stand suddenly still, then beat so fast and strong as to be positively stifling ; the color came and went in her cheeks, and her hands trembled. Anxious to avoid the notice of others, she toyed nervously with her fan, and after awhile to some extent recovered her equanimity ; but she never could tell what the lecturer said that night. Her escort, who tried to be entertaining, thought her very absent-minded, which was quite a just conclusion. As they were going out of the house Rodney chanced to turn and saw her. He bowed courteously, but coldly, and passed on. Her heart turned sick and faint, and through the long hours of the night she could not sleep. The next morning, while in her room at the house of a friend, whose acquaintance she had but lately formed, but who was a

very dear friend notwithstanding, a card was brought to her, bearing the familiar name, "Rodney Gilbert."

"The gentleman is in the parlor," said the bearer.

She gave a finishing touch to her toilet and descended to the parlor. Rodney was its only occupant. He shook hands with her cordially, and after they were seated made some common-place inquiries in regard to her own health and that of her mother's, of how she had been enjoying herself, etc. By a strange stroke of Fate Hope had his letter in her pocket, and as she drew her handkerchief therefrom the letter came with it. Rodney stooped to pick it up, glanced at the direction, and returned it to her. Their eyes met--a reproachful glance in his; in her's an expression of bashfulness, of hope and of fear combined. The faces of both turned crimson :

"I received this just a week ago," she explained. "It had been misplaced for months at the postoffice."

Her regretful countenance betrayed her and gave him courage to say :

"Is it possible, Hope, that I, perhaps you, too, have endured months of misery from a trifling mischance?"

"If that is all we need not care so much," was her reply.

"It is all unless you continue obdurate, unless you still have scruples about marrying me. I have trampled down pride, almost self-respect, in paying you this visit after your seeming neglect to notice my letter. Darling, can you not reward me for it? Can you not give me your heart and hand? I have waited so long, so hopelessly; I am so utterly miserable without you. The world is a desolate wilderness to me uncheered by your presence. Oh! my precious love, the time that we have been separated is surely enough of sorrow for one lifetime. Let there be no more absence, no more misunderstandings, no more sorrow, unless such as we can share together. 'The time past of

our life is sufficient for us' to have been apart. Hand in hand let us now tread life's pathway, whether it be strewn with flowers or be thick with thorns. With you for my companion I ask no more of this world. I can then say I am content. Be my own dear wife, Hope, and make me happy."

"What need to give her answer? What need to tell the perfect bliss of these two hearts, already linked together by deep, abiding, mutual affection? They talked on for sometime, loth to part from each other; and when he left Rodney drew her to him in a close embrace, imprinting a kiss on lips now all his own, and both felt that in all their future lives there would never come to either a happier hour than this of their betrothal.

CHAPTER XXI.

Eight years have passed away since we first saw Hope Caldwell and Rodney, and we wish to take a last look at both ere bidding them an eternal farewell. We saw them as they were *then*; we will view them as they are *now*. For a little over six years they have been married, and during that time have enjoyed as perfect happiness as falls to the lot of any here below. Blessed with fine health, abundant means, mutual love and an abiding sense of gratitude to God within their hearts, how could they be otherwise than happy? Under Hope's influence Rodney has done much good in the community where he resides. In particular has she interested him in behalf of the cause of education; they have both given time and means and effort in behalf of that cause. Yet not much of their married life has been spent at home. They have lived a

part of their time in New York, a part in Europe, and only a small portion of it, so far, in the neighborhood where Hope once taught. She went to the Centennial with her husband, and the master-piece which she saw there discouraged her no little in her aspirations to become an artist. Her own feeble efforts seemed to fall so infinitely below *them*. But believing that we are responsible for the improvement of even one talent, she continued to devote much of her leisure time to her former absorbing avocation. Rodney gave her every advantage in this respect, for he was proud of her talent, and delighted to indulge her every wish ; he secured the best masters for her, and they resided at Rome sometime, in order to perfect her training, by beholding for herself the innumerable works of the great masters day after day. Of course she has improved very much, and her paintings command their price, though still falling far below her ideal. The money obtained by the sale of them she has so far devoted strictly to charity, bestowing it where she deemed it would effect the most good. Neither wealth, nor the society of the most intelligent and refined people, nor the flatteries of the great and renowned, has weaned her heart from the deep and abiding interest which she takes in every poor, struggling soul laboring to break the shackles of ignorance. Her one session of teaching invested all childhood with an enduring charm to her. Unspoiled by the world, she pursues her useful course, perfectly content in performing her duties and in the sunshine of her husband's love. As for Rodney, he is scarcely like the same person that he once was, so genial and pleasant are his manners, so free from all bitterness and so hopeful of the future is he. Perhaps he is not the only man whose wife is the main-spring of both his usefulness and of his happiness. On this, the last time that we ever expected to behold them, they were on a visit to Tradeville. Hope wished to visit

the place, though her mother no longer resided there. Rodney's home sheltered her now, his own mother having departed this life two years ago. Mary stayed with her during the absence of Hope and her husband. On the last evening of their visit to Tradeville Rodney proposed a walk to the river. The bridge very naturally suggested itself to their minds as a fitting place to take their last look at the waters which it spanned and on the village near by. Standing upon it as she had done eight years ago, and true to her childish nature yet, Hope threw sticks and pebbles into the water and watched them as they were borne away upon its bosom.

"I wonder if you will always be a child, Hope?" said her husband. But his smile was as fond as it had been while standing on the banks of the little stream the first evening he had ever told her of his love.

"Yes," was her reply ; "I hope so. But do you know, Rodney, that these poor sticks floating down the current put very serious thoughts into my head. They remind me of ourselves, floating down the stream of time, carried onward, onward, until we reach the ocean of eternity. Then again, I compare them to poor, tempted creatures, who, when once they begin to drift down stream, never come back, and are at last utterly lost. Do you know that I feel sorry for the very worst of sinners? Just think of the temptations in the way, and consider the weakness of human nature ; then, too, so many children have no one to teach them the right way."

"You are always kind, my darling. That is why I first came to love you, I expect, instead of Amelia, with her fascinations."

"Poor Amelia!" exclaimed Hope. "I do not envy her, with all of her charms. I know that she is not half so happy as I am."

"Nor does she deserve to be," returned he ; "she is too

utterly heartless to be a good wife for any one, and will possibly end her days as a faded-out belle, or marry some poor wretch for his money. I shudder to think of how near I came to being her husband."

"God is very good," murmured Hope. "His kind providence brought us together and made us happy; but Rodney, not even with your precious love and companionship, not even with all the comforts of our pleasant home, am I perfectly content, unless I could see others happy. I do so long to see the great cause of education—education both of the intellect and of the heart, pervade the length and breadth of this, my dear native State."

"And I trust that your wishes are true prophets, my love. It is true that as yet statistics do not prove that numerically, at least, the noble cause has gained ground during the last few years, yet what conclusion more reasonable to come to than that, with Normal Schools established in various places for the preparation of teachers in order to render them more efficient; with Graded Schools in many of the towns, with new and improved methods of teaching, and with a uniform system of text-books recommended by the Legislature, North Carolina is destined to a bright and glorious future in regard to education, and with that, in regard to everything that pertains to her best interests. Eight years ago there were none of these improvements. Of course there were many good and faithful instructors and many fine schools, but the majority of what might be termed 'neighborhood schools' in the country were conducted on no fixed plan whatever. Each teacher had his own way of teaching and his own favorite text-books, and as each school changed its teacher quite often, this fact acted much against the progress of a pupil. A child who attends school some four or five months this year, and is then taken home to work in the crop, and who perchance studies under a dozen different teachers during his school

life, each employing a different method of instruction, perhaps each preferring different books, such a child, I say, must be a marvel of talent and industry if he gains a thorough understanding even of mere rudiments. Yet in the country a few years ago this was the ordinary way of acquiring an education for all except the most favored. Now, I believe, there is decidedly an upward tendency. Normal Schools have done much for the Old North State. They have opened the eyes of teachers to their own shortcomings, and the latter have set to work with a zeal and interest in their calling hitherto unthought of. Then, too, though there will always be shades of difference in different individuals, yet in the methods of instruction much greater uniformity may reasonably be expected than in the past. Teachers' Institutes will, to some extent, effect this object. In short, though we still fall very far below perfection, yet I believe our *now* is better than our *then* of a few years back, and I trust that our future will be proportionately brighter. Of one thing I feel sure, that, take the State as a unit, and the people in a body, and there is no better place to live in, nor people to dwell among than the State and the people who have hitherto been neglectful of their own true interests."

"Yes," she said, with eyes suffused with tears of deep emotion ; "yet I hope to see the day when the intelligence and enterprise of its people shall place it far, very far ahead of where it now stands, when its grand natural resources, both of intellectual and of material wealth, may be fully developed. The right kind of education can alone effect this, and that is now accessible to all. But Rodney, there is one agent of good which is perfectly accessible to our people which is yet thought too lightly of, in the country more especially. Sunday-schools might flourish all the time with but little expense or trouble, and no one surely will deny that they do great good when

properly conducted. Not ten miles from here is one, which, by the perseverance and constancy of one man, has been sustained for twenty years. He is seldom, if ever, absent from his post, or if so, has some one to supply his place, and his efforts have been the means of giving some children nearly all of the education which they possess. A grateful neighborhood should award him all due praise."

"Yet his scholars, I suppose, will be his 'crown of rejoicing?'"

"I judge so, for I never felt more grateful to God in my life for my having once been a teacher than when I saw David Wheeler stand in the pulpit and heard him preach the 'unsearchable riches of Christ,' and when I knew, too, that soon he expected to spread the glad tidings in heathen lands. Though his school life with me was a short one, yet I fondly hoped that perchance I helped sow some good seeds in his heart, which are thus yielding a rich harvest."

"I did not tell you, Hope, that I saw George Simmons last week in Raleigh, when I was there."

"No ; how is he ?"

"He is well and is carrying on a prosperous business. He was out riding, when I saw him, in a fine phaeton drawn by a span of horses, and was in company with a lovely girl. Of course he is not a handsome young man, yet you would be surprised at the improvement in his looks. His manners, too, are very easy and pleasant ; and better than all, he enjoys a most enviable reputation. Tom, he told me, was staying on the farm. He is married, and now takes care both of wife and mother, and is, I judge from what George told me, getting on very well. The latter inquired particularly after you."

"It has been sometime since I have seen my old scholars, and you did not give me much information in regard to them or to my old acquaintances when you returned from

your last trip home, and I was thinking too much of mother to inquire about others just then."

"Did I not? Then I will make amends now. First and foremost, my old sweetheart, Mrs. Leonard, and Herbert Ransom are to be married very soon."

"Is it possible! how long has it been since her husband got killed?"

"Three years ago, and if I was left to judge I should say that it would have been better for her and for the community at large had his horse thrown him ten years before."

"We must not judge, Rodney. It seems to me that even the worst of sinners are entitled to their short day of grace."

"Well, at any rate, poor Mary is suited now. I used to be awfully jealous of Herbert when he was paying attention to you."

"Well, your jealousy was utterly without reason. We were the best of friends, but nothing more."

"As I trust you will ever be. It would grieve me to see you otherwise, for I can truly say that he was one of the best friends that I ever had. I shall always feel grateful to him for kind words spoken in my behalf, when the rest of the world was against me. Thanks to his influence and your own, I think that Johnnie Twining will now do well. His father and mother are now useful members of society. The Tyler children are getting on exceedingly well. They travel around in fine style, and Euphemia and Octavia can both perform nicely on the organ. I expect their good old aunt is perfectly contented."

"I am so glad!" she exclaimed; "though I own that I did not think when I commenced teaching school and got my first message from Miss Rachel that I ever would like her."

"The Hartwell girls, how are they prospering?"

"They are married to hard-working farmers, and are

leading the life of the average farmer's wife in this country. The two Stuart girls have lately married—one to Willie Stuart, the other to Dr. Jones. Robert King is farming, and is, I believe, getting on right well. The Watkins children are all prospering. They are intelligent, too. Not all the good seed which you might attempt to sow in the hearts of Joe and Sam Liggins could live unchoked by the seeds of evil example and evil training at their own homes. Poor fellows! they are rowdy, drinking men like their unfortunate father. Estelle Moran and a Mr. Hamilton married just three weeks ago. Daniel Young is still single. As for Mrs. Turnnage, Mrs. Ambler, Mrs. Powers, Mrs. Hunter and their children, they are all pretty much as they were when you last saw them. The children have had advantages and have improved them; but time alone will develop their individual character. The education of the intellect does not always make the individual character better or worse."

"Well, I suppose that I will see them all before long, but I will never behold a dearer spot than this bridge. Not the 'bridge of sighs,' in Venice; not the bridge at London; not one of those whose memory is linked with grand old historic associations is half so dear as this one."

"Why, my little wife, *did* you and a former lover ever plight your vows here?" he inquired, smilingly confident of having his question negatived.

"No, indeed," she replied (looking into the eyes which always seemed so beautiful to her), but here I used to stand and dream as I watched the river in its ceaseless flow. I used to say to myself 'I shall never love again; ambition must take the place of all tender feeling in my heart. At its shrine I will lay down even my life, if necessary, and when I am resting peacefully beneath the daisies, when earthly pain and earthly joy are alike unfelt by me, happy girls, leaning on the arms of loved ones, shall survey the

scenes which my hand has portrayed, and exclaim : " Oh ! that I had her talent ! " little dreaming that it was at once my blessing and my curse, as the possession of talent is so apt to prove ! "

" Tell me, Hope, " Rodney exclaimed excitedly, " if your choice lay between my love and gratified ambition, which would you take ? "

" Which would I take ? " she answered, in tones burdened with tenderness, as she smiled in her husband's face ; " ask rather which would I choose, life or death ? It would be the death of all my earthly happiness to be deprived of your love ; it would not affect it in the least if I were utterly unknown to the world. I will say, as you once said to me : ' You are my world ! ' "

" Do you know, " said he, " I have sometimes thought that a man run a great risk in marrying a talented and ambitious woman ; but I see now that I was in error, provided a true woman's heart beat in her bosom. "

" Yes, I suppose so, " she replied abstractedly ; " but let me finish telling you why this bridge is so dear to me. "

" Proceed ; I am all attention. "

" I was standing here eight years ago, when I saw the mail coming—the same mail which brought my letter from Mr. Watkins. That letter led to our acquaintanceship. Every circumstance connected with that is precious to me. "

" Hope's first school was destined to be her last, " he smilingly remarked.

" Yes, and though I did my best I am glad for the sake of others that it was my last. I think one main reason why there has been, and still is, so much ignorance in our land, is on account of the teachers being so deficient. "

" Well, I cannot blame you for the interest you take in the education of the young, and when we go home you have my free and full permission to do all you can in our neighborhood in behalf of the noble cause. But, darling,